

AN ALADURA CHURCH IN EASTERN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

This thesis is a synchronic and diachronic study of an aladura or prayer-healing church - the Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Serafim - in the Ibo town of Onitsha, eastern Nigeria. The major part of the thesis concentrates on analysing the structure of relationships in the prayer-house, the processes of role behaviour, and the norms and beliefs that sanction the role structure. The thesis concludes by extending the analysis of roles to the social field of Onitsha where members of the prayer-house earn their living.

Chapter 1 begins the thesis with a diachronic analysis of the processes whereby the prophet-founder's charisma was routinised in the Eternal Sacred Order between 1925 and 1966; and the next chapter examines the emerging role structure of the prayer-house, Onitsha, between 1949 and 1966. Chapter 3 considers the religious beliefs and values of Serafim as a synthesis of customary religion and Christianity. This leads on in Chapter 4 to the process of role control which hinges on the visioners and prophets, and to Chapter 5 which studies role strain and conflict in the prayer-house.

Chapter 6 begins with an examination of the principal socio-economic features of Onitsha as a neo-urban centre. The latter part

of the chapter deals with the prayer-house as a segment of the wider social field of Onitsha.

The thesis concludes with an assessment of the structural significance of the role structure of the branch of the Eternal Sacred Order at Fegge, Onitsha.



## PREFACE

This study of an aladura church in eastern Nigeria is the result of fieldwork carried out in Nigeria during 1965 and 1966. For the most part my research took place in Onitsha, a town in eastern Nigeria. But I also travelled extensively in the east, visiting prayer-houses, participating in services and talking to the elders and members. In order to obtain information on the origins of the Eternal Sacred Order and the course of events up to the time when I did my fieldwork, I went to Lagos where it all began, attended services and interviewed some of the senior elders.

I am most grateful for the Hayter studentship administered by the School of Oriental and African Studies from 1963 to 1966; and to the School of Oriental and African Studies for granting me a Governing Body Post-Graduate Exhibition for 1967-1968.

The sources of information for this thesis are three-fold: historical, sociological and that of participant observation. The historical data which enabled me to reconstruct the pattern of events in the Order between 1925 when Tunolashe's Praying Band of Serafim was founded, and 1965 when I began my fieldwork, is both oral and written. Interviews were conducted with the present Baba Aladura (or praying father)

and other senior elders in Lagos, who were all early members of the Serafim. I checked this information by further talks with the senior elders in Enugu; and the leader of a secessionist section of the Cherubim and Serafim in Port Harcourt. This man was intimately involved in the events leading to the establishment of the Serafim in eastern Nigeria, and knew the elders at the Lagos prayer-house in the early 1930's. Similarly, I reconstructed events at the Onitsha prayer-house as from those days in 1949 when it really got underway up to 1966, by interviews with the founding elders at the Onitsha and Enugu prayer-houses. The latter prayer-house is the regional headquarters of the eastern Conference of the Order.

An important means of checking the veracity of information obtained by interviews with the elders in Lagos lay in written material. The most significant of these sources is the series of reports on cases submitted to the law courts by quarreling factions in the Cherubim and Serafim. The most important cases are: suit no.151 of 1930 in the Divisional Court, Lagos; suit no.LD/194/59 in the Western Divisional Court, Lagos; suit no.JDGA/3 CL/59 in the Grade "A" court at Ijebu-Ode, western Nigeria; suit no.LD/635/61 in the High Court, Lagos; suit no. LD/194/63 in the High Court, Lagos and suit no.LD/635/63 in the Supreme Court, Lagos. The most recent case concerning the division in the national headquarters at Mt. Zion, Lagos, between those supporting the present Baba Aladura, and those challenging him, is still in the law courts.

The many circulars issued by the governing body of the Eternal Sacred Order since 1962 constitute another mine of information. Although they do not go back very far, they do cover the principal doctrinal and organisational changes which have done much to bring the Order's administrative machinery up to date. The prayer-house files at Enugu also proved useful in reconstructing the history of the Order between 1949 and 1966, for the Enugu prayer-house is the regional head-quarters of the eastern Conference of the Order. Unfortunately, I was not permitted to investigate the files at the Onitsha prayer-house; and many of those relating to the early years have been lost.

Finally, there are the publications of the Order. Although not much has been done in the way of putting forward the doctrines, liturgy or history of this Church in comparison with the publications of aladura bodies like the Church of the Lord, the three main publications do constitute an additional source of literary information. There is the "history" of the founder's death called "Ojokoro" published in the early 1960's; the substantial pamphlet called "The Order" issued in the early 1960's, which sets out the liturgy, rules of behaviour and the doctrine of the Order; and the Cherubim and Serafim Bible Reading Pamphlets of 1961 and 1965, which give information on anniversaries, deceased members and the elders currently holding positions in Nigeria, Ghana and Dahomey.

The second source of information which I mentioned previously was obtained by sociological methods. In order to acquire some hard

facts about the local origins, education, previous denomination, marital status and so forth of the Serafim in Onitsha, I conducted a survey of 113 members at the Fegge and Inland Town prayer-houses. This sample was compared with a control group of 103 non-members interviewed in Fegge and Inland Town; and I explain the sample design in Appendix A. These two surveys provided me with the information to examine the changing social composition of the prayer-house. They also provided a means of assessing the extent to which the social characteristics of the members of the prayer-house diverge from those of the wider population. The survey of members therefore gave me much of the factual information which I used to explain social changes in the Fegge prayer-house since 1949. The sample of non-members was also important in enabling me to set out some of the socio-economic characteristics of the Onitsha population in Chapter 6. This information was supplemented by government publications on education, employment, reports on wages and salaries, seven year plans and the Census of 1953 - among other texts.

In 1966, I conducted a survey of elders and pastors working in mission and aladura churches in Onitsha. The purpose of this survey was to provide an additional source of factual information on other religious bodies in the town than the Eternal Sacred Order: I explain the design of this survey in Appendix B.

The third source of information for this study of an aladura church in eastern Nigeria was that of participant observation. After a couple of months I was given the white prayer-gown of Serafim, went

out on open-air preaching, attended conferences and so on. Some weeks after I had declared several visions, it was announced that the Spirit had revealed that I was a member of the Cherubim band of angels who guard the throne of God. I therefore tried to get the "feel" of being a Serafim as much as was possible.

In writing the thesis I have therefore relied on material obtained from three different kinds of sources: the historical, the sociological and the personal of participant observation. The oral and written sources of information enabled me to undertake a diachronic analysis of the development of the Order between 1925 and 1966; and also of the development of the prayer-house, Onitsha, between 1949 and 1966. Then the surveys I conducted in 1965 and 1966 in Onitsha provided much of the data for my account of changes in the social composition of the prayer-house; and of the present socio-economic characteristics of the members as well as of the wider population. Finally the method of participant observation, in addition to providing an invaluable access to gossip, back-biting and local politicking, helped me to see the situation as Serafim view it. At the same time I of course tried to retain the perspective of an observer.

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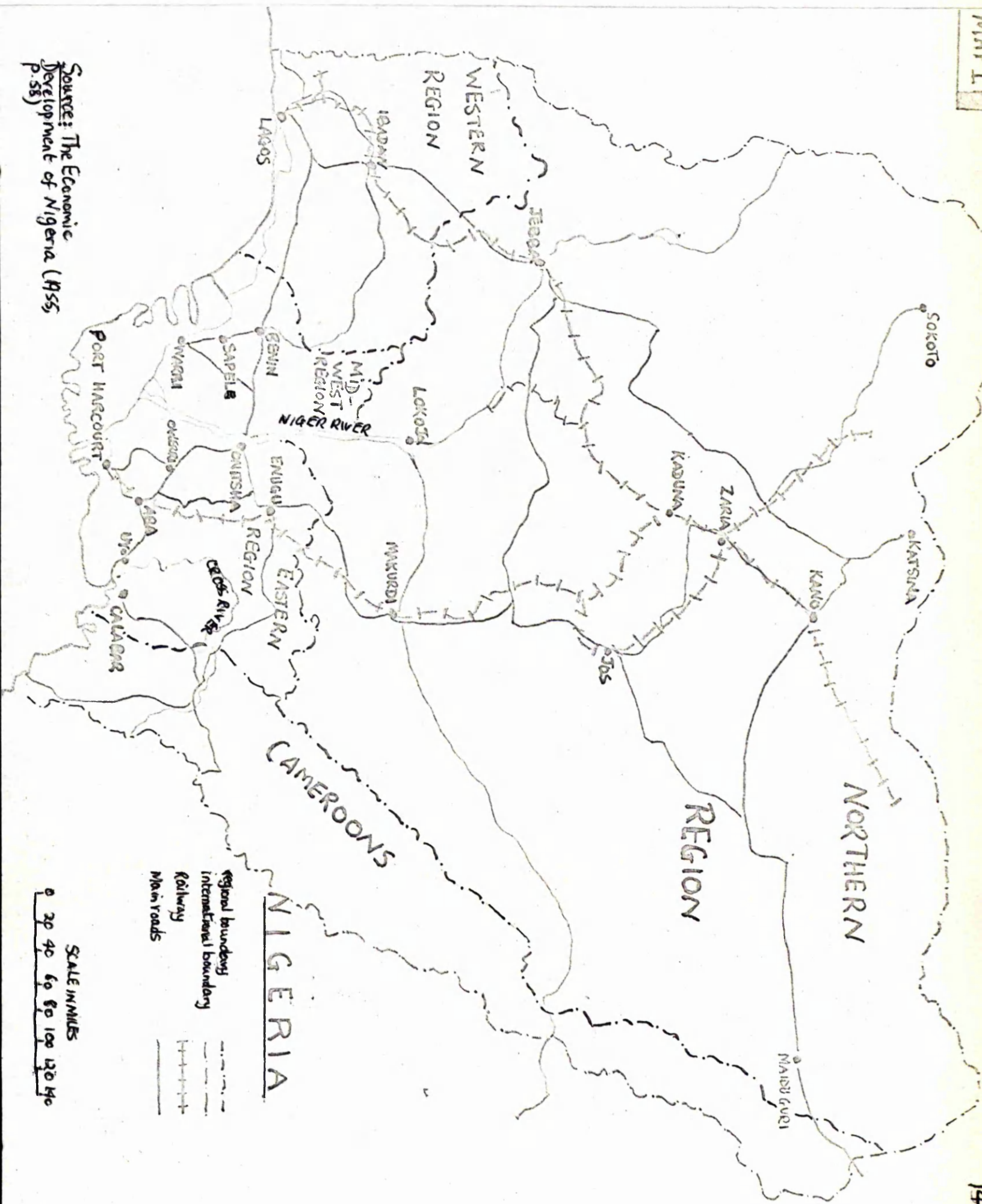
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Source: The Economic Development of Nigeria (1955, p. 58)



## INTRODUCTION

The Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Serafim is an aladura or praying church, which was founded by an illiterate but Christian Yoruba prophet in Lagos, western Nigeria, in 1930. The term aladura is a Yoruba word which means praying: the noun is adura or prayer. Today, the Order has branches in Ghana, Dahomey and all over Nigeria. According to reliable estimates by the senior elders, there are about 25,000 members in Nigeria, and about 5,000 in Ghana and Dahomey.

Since the Eternal Sacred Order is a Christian church, it is important to place its origins in the context of religious change in Yorubaland. It was among the Yorubas, who are the main tribe of western Nigeria, that the first independent churches began in the 1880's. The men who founded them were already members of the principal Protestant denominations, which had been brought to southern Nigeria after the early 1830's by overseas missionary societies like the Methodist Mission, or the Church Missionary Society (J.B. Webster, 1964, pp 68-91). These early independent churches are generally called African churches. For their founders were preoccupied with establishing churches which would give Nigerians the power to determine how they, as Africans, chose to

worship God.<sup>1</sup>

But by the first world war, Yoruba men and women who belonged to the Protestant and African churches were again searching for a more meaningful<sup>2</sup> way of practising Christianity. This drive for a truly Yoruba version of Western Christianity centred on the power of prayer to reveal the workings of the Holy Spirit. It was believed that by prayer and fasting the Spirit would speak to God's children through His prophets; and that prayer could also heal and give protection against witchcraft. The churches, which were founded by prophets who thus revealed the word of God anew after the first world war, were called aladura churches.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the African churches, the aladuras were not preoccupied with the issue of independence from white control: their concern was to establish a deeper and more effective spiritual life within the already established framework of independency begun by the African churches (H. Turner, 1967, vol.1. p.6.).

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1. Similar churches which were politically inspired are known as "Ethiopian" churches in South Africa (B. Sundkler, 1948 p.54). The Simon Kimbangu movement of the 1920's to 1950's in the Belgian Congo was overtly nationalistic (G. Balandier, 1953 p.53). However, the term "Ethiopian" is not known in Nigeria, and has no meaning for members of the African churches or the aladuras.
  2. By meaningful, I mean that certain Yoruba Christians were dissatisfied with the staid and alien approach of Western missionaries to the supernatural. Once the idea of fervent prayer in little groups had caught on among members of Protestant and African churches, or among prophets and their followers (J. Peel, 1967, pp.106-119), it seemed obvious that the way to living and practising the Christian way lay through prayer, faith and purity.
  3. The South African equivalent is the Zionist movement which stresses "healing, speaking with tongues, purification rites and taboos as the main expressions of their faith" (B. Sundkler, 1948, p.55).

Whereas the African churches were mainly interested in matters of polity, their liturgy being directly borrowed from Protestant sources, the aladuras stressed the Pentecostal aspects of Christianity and sought ways of tapping the undoubted power of God to influence man's condition for the better. Unlike the South African Zionists, the Nigerian aladuras have had no permanent roots in sectarian bodies overseas: they are an indigenous response to Christianity and mission education. Their founding prophets were all Christians, their leading members literate and mainly drawn from the Protestant denominations - as was the case for the African churches. In spite of the liturgical and organisational differences between the African churches and the aladuras, both types of independent church share the characteristic of being controlled and financed by Nigerians. In this respect they differ from the Pentecostal churches from overseas who have, however, exercised some influence upon certain doctrines of the aladuras. This is true, for instance, of the Christ Apostolic Church stress on healing by faith alone.<sup>1</sup>

When Moses Orimolade Tunolashe, the founder of the Eternal Sacred Order, began preaching in interior Yorubaland after the first world war, he was following in the steps of wandering evangelists who had gone before him (J. Peel, 1966, p.102). The first aladura church known to observers

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1. As Harold Turner has pointed out in connection with the Church of the Lord, it was only after the Faith Tabernacle from the U.S.A. and the Welsh Apostolic Church had arrived in the 1930's, that speaking with tongues became an ingredient of aladura worship (H. Turner, 1967, vol.II, p.129).

was founded in 1920 by Joseph Shadare in Ijebu-Ode, western Nigeria. Shadare was a synodsmen in the Anglican church of St. Saviour's at Ijebu-Ode. And the church of the Precious Stone originated in a praying-group set up at St. Saviour's to obtain spiritual<sup>1</sup> support for members against the ravages of the influenza epidemic of 1918 (H. Turner, 1967, vol.1, p.9). The members of this early aladura church, which came to Lagos in 1921, proved to be a link in the chain of events leading to the Babalola revival of the early 1930's, and the emergence of the Christ Apostolic Church.<sup>2</sup> But even before this a prophet in eastern Nigeria had begun his work preaching against idols and witchcraft, and revealing the power of the Holy Spirit. Late in 1915 Garrick Braide of the Anglican church in the Delta acted as the focal figure in a great revival, which led to the foundation of the Garrick Braide and then the Christ Army Church (H. Turner, *ibid*, p.7).

Thus, although the Eternal Sacred Order stood on the fringes of the Babalola revival of the early 1930's, it should be remembered that

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1. My use of the word "spiritual" is based on indigenous and theological use. The aladuras, and those who are not members, speak of churches like the Order as a spiritual church because the Holy Spirit is demonstrably at work in their midst. Theologically, the word spiritual refers to the fact that all men can be channels for God's spiritual power; and that the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit is immanent in all men. In the aladuras, the Holy Spirit is proved to be active through the gifts of praying with effect, healing, prophesying and speaking with tongues.
  2. The Christ Apostolic Church, with nearly 100,000 members, is today the third largest Christian body in western Nigeria with many branches in the east (Broadcast on the western Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation, 1958: quoted in J. Grimley and G. Robinson, 1966, p.304).

this particular aladura church is a part of a wider religious movement. Like other aladuras, the Order was the product of more general social and economic changes in Yorubaland. The early leaders of Tunolashe's Praying Band of Serafim, which he established in Lagos in 1925 with a young Yoruba girl, were predominantly clerks, teachers, artisans and technical workers (J. Peel, 1966, p.146). It was these literate Christians, working away from home, who were sophisticated enough to respond to the appeal of preaching the gospel of prayer to the unconverted; and who were educated enough to set up committees of administration, think out matters of belief and decide on liturgy, which is generally based on the Protestant model. So far as we know the aladuras in Nigeria draw heavily on Protestant converts<sup>1</sup> (see Chapter 3, pp.122-123): this appears to be due to the authoritarian structure of the Catholic church, and the Protestant stress on self-help, salvation by the individual's faith, and open access to the Bible.

### The Argument

Having discussed the general background to the aladura movement in Yorubaland, albeit briefly, it is time to turn to the particular aladura

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1. This point appears to apply to other parts of Africa where independent churches have been studied. Simon Kimbangu a Mukongo prophet in the Belgian Congo, who began preaching in 1921, was a catechist in the English Baptist church (G. Balandier, 1953, p.49). His principal leaders were catechists in Protestant missions. The South African independents were likewise drawn mainly from the Protestant missions, their liturgy being based on that of their former church (B. Sundkler, 1948, p.54). Again, the prophet Wade Harris, a Grebo from Liberia, who preached extensively between 1913-1915 in the Ivory Coast, was a Methodist (B. Holas, 1965, pp.260-261).



church which is the subject of this thesis. So far I have been speaking of the Eternal Sacred Order in a loose way, without defining the exact unit of analysis. For the most part I am concerned with one branch of the Order, the prayer-house at Fegge which is an electoral ward in Onitsha. The prayer-house was founded by a prophetess of the Eternal Sacred Order in 1949 when she came to Onitsha, now the second largest town in eastern Nigeria. The origins of the Order were in Lagos; and it was at the Lagos branch called Mt. Zion that the doctrine, liturgy, system of social relationships and institutions of authority evolved over forty-three years. It was this system, as it then stood, which was transferred to Fegge, Onitsha in 1949: this prayer-house was the first of many in the east. Thus, when I speak of the "Order" I refer to the Mt. Zion house of prayers at Lagos, which, in the general context of the organisation, represents all branches of the Order. But when I use the phrase "prayer-house" I am referring to the branch at Fegge, Onitsha.

It is therefore important, if only for reasons of clarity, to begin the analysis with the Order in Lagos. But there is also the fact that it is impossible to explain the present system of relationships, which constitutes the Order, without first considering the way in which the charisma of the founder was routinised. Relations between members were changed into relationships as the charisma of the prophet Tunolashe was detached from his person, and made into an objective and transferable entity through the ritual of ordination into a series of ranked positions. It is after I have recounted how the structure of the Order emerged, and

explained the present system, that I turn to the prayer-house in Onitsha in Chapter 2. From there on I examine various aspects of behaviour and belief in the prayer-house by means of diachronic and synchronic analysis, the time span being the years between 1949 and 1966.

My approach to the Eternal Sacred Order, both on the national level and that of the prayer-house in Onitsha, was determined by the fact that it seems preferable to concentrate on the actual processes involved in the evolution and maintenance of a system of relationships and norms, rather than stressing the "adaptive" functions of such religious associations (G. Baeta, 1962, p.6; K. Little, 1965, pp.87-88). For it is only by explaining how social relationships are ordered and handled that, if desired, we could come to any worthwhile conclusion about the so-called "adaptive" functions of the Eternal Sacred Order as representing an urban-based religious association. Nevertheless, I prefer to omit the question of "adaption" and "integration" into a "wider social system than previously prevailed" (K. Little, *ibid*, p.1). Statements like this are based on highly questionable assumptions, which hinge on the alleged existence of two types of social systems: the traditional and the modern - the latter is exemplified by life in urban settlements. The identification of the social and cultural changes wrought by education, manufacturing industries, government bureaucracies, and modern ways of living with urban life has already caused some students to allege that

the aladuras are an urban phenomenon (see J. Peel, 1966, p.13)<sup>1</sup>.

The core of this thesis therefore lies in an analysis of the structure of relationships in the Eternal Sacred Order, and of the processes at work which produce adjustments in the structure to changing situations. The analysis has two aspects. First of all there is the problem of explaining, by way of a diachronic study, how particular forms of relationships, institutions of authority and control emerged; not forgetting the associated norms, religious beliefs, rituals and patterns of worship which sanction the internal organisation of the Order and express its *raison d'être* - to bring man near to God through an acceptance of the truth of the Holy Trinity, to preach the gospel of salvation, and to realise the various powers of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, it is necessary to apply a synchronic analysis in order to explain how the system, once it is established, adjusts to changing conditions and relationships between members. This occurs through the processes of strain and conflict. There are three principal sources of strain: all, however, can result in the generation of internal change. To begin with, there is the development of strain and conflict between members within the Order.

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1. As I have already mentioned the aladuras - like the African churches - were the result of conversion to Christianity and literacy. Literacy was not invariably associated with the towns, for there were mission schools in the rural areas of Yorubaland. In eastern Nigeria, the early missions concentrated most of their energies in the rural areas of the Delta, Rivers and southern Owerri province; it was here that the first aladuras arose after the first world war. The factors of education and conversion to Christianity by a Protestant denomination were, therefore, more important reasons for the growth of the aladuras during the inter-war period than the urban way of life (See Chapter 6 pp. ~~224-226~~ <sup>231-233</sup>).

Then<sup>there</sup> is the problem of incompatible obligations and expectations, which may arise at work or in the home, and which clash with the kind of behaviour expected of adherents. Lastly, there are more general tensions in the population at large, as those between tribes or political factions, which can cause rifts in the structure of relationships in the Order when members become involved in such situations.

Thus, while this thesis concentrates on the Eternal Sacred Order as a system of relationships per se, I am also concerned to relate the Order to the wider social field<sup>1</sup> of which it is a part. There are two levels of analysis; that of beliefs and norms, and that of social behaviour. Both form an integral part of my attempt to explain the evolution and nature of the structure of relationships in the Order, and the dynamics of changing relations.

### Factors of Analysis

In order to sharpen the analysis I have organised this study around the concept of roles. The main advantage of this concept is that, when used in conjunction with the idea of social fields and networks,<sup>2</sup> the observer can trace out precisely the different relations between actors in a specific situation. These relations may be proved by case studies

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1. I discuss the concept of "social field" in Chapter 6 (footnote 1, p.218). For the moment it is sufficient to say that following the work of J. Barnes, A. Epstein and others, I define a social field as consisting of a series of inter-connected relations most of which influence the other.
  2. A network may be defined as a series of inter-connected relationships which focus on an individual ego; many of these personal or immediate networks make up a social field (see J.C. Mitchell, 1966, p.58).

to span several fields of activity, so that the analysis is freed from assumptions relating to bounded and closed social systems, which have their own self-generating equilibrium. The concept of roles is, therefore, a convenient tool of analysis which can be used to explain the social structure of the prayer-house, which is located in the wider field of Onitsha.

Nevertheless, there is a methodological drawback to any analysis which hinges on the concept of roles. Dahrendorf was one of the first to point out that although we may speak of the role of A vis a vis B, and C vis a vis D, we can not relate A to C because he does not hold a role with regard to C (R. Dahrendorf, 1959, p.121). However, in the late 1950's anthropologists like Epstein tried to get over the analytical problem created by some persons not being linked by roles. This was done by tracing through the actions of migrants in Luanshya on the Copper-belt in their dual roles of townsmen and tribesmen. Migrants are involved in several fields of activity in the mine, the housing area and the reserve, which are linked by their roles as townsmen and tribesmen (A. Epstein, 1958, pp.10-46). More recent studies have developed the concept of personal networks, which if examined in detail, lead to extended networks of roles, or social fields<sup>1</sup>. The principal aim of studies which rely on these concepts is to go beyond the immediate divisions between people

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1. See, for instance, P.H. Gulliver "Dispute Settlement Without Courts" (Symposium no.34, the Wrenner-Gren Foundation, 1966); and A. Mayer "The Significance of Quasi-Groups" (A.S.A. no.IV, 1966 pp.97-122).

holding different sets of roles, by seeking out the indirect connexions between role holders in several fields. Since much depends upon extremely detailed fieldwork which involves extended case studies, something of the initial objection to role analysis just mentioned probably still exists.

However, the concept of roles is advantageous in so far as the subject of this thesis is concerned. For the prayer-house is small enough for all members to know one another (there are about 168 members), and as we shall see, more than a few Serafim<sup>1</sup> hold several roles in the prayer-house. It is, therefore, possible to examine the process whereby action in one situation affects behaviour in another, because members are linked by their various roles. Again, when it comes to studying the way in which role behaviour in the field of work influences action in the prayer-house, extended case studies are not absolutely necessary. Our concern lies in the immediate interaction of Serafim with non-members, and not in the ramifying effects of such action in the wider social field of Onitsha.

As we all know, many definitions of the term role have been advocated. These range from Linton's classic conception of roles as the enactment of the rights embodied in a status, to Ward Goodenough's recent complex use of the term role expounded in his essay in "The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology" (1966, p.2).

Following Nadel (S. Nadel, 1957, pp.22-25) and Banton (M. Banton, 1965, p.28) I propose to limit the term status to denote a ranked position

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1. The word "Serafim", which I shall use throughout the thesis, refers to members of the Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Serafim.

in a hierarchy of prestige, and to use the term role to indicate the following characteristics. Thus - a role is a cluster of behavioural and normative attributes that allocate rights and duties, and outline the way in which the holder is expected by those with whom he interacts to behave. Each role is named, indicates a structured relationship, and is placed in a hierarchy of authority which determines the amount of prestige accorded to specific categories of role holders. The lowest role, for instance, is that of floor member because floor members have no formal authority over any other category of persons. The most prestigious role at the Fegge prayer-house is that of Supervising Apostle<sup>1</sup>. The man holding this role is entrusted with final responsibility for the welfare of members, and takes the final decisions on matters of policy. Finally, the term refers to an ideal pattern of behaviour which is seldom realised in actual role performance (M. Banton, 1965, p.26).

The basic concept relating to role is that of attributes which sum up the set of norms, rights and duties, and expected behaviour that compose the content of a role. This raises the problem of what method should be applied to identify the pivotal or basic attributes of a role, which give a role its character and mark its boundaries. Nadel (S. Nadel, 1957, pp.33-35) has said that one method for isolating the attributes of a role is to refer to the "semantic content of a role name", since this denotes the properties which the entity so named is presumed to possess.

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1. See Chapter 2 where I discuss the sub-roles open to branches outside Lagos, and those particular to the Mt. Zion house of prayers, Lagos (footnote 2, p.79).

In spite of the inherent subjectivity of such an approach, it is the only one open to us in the absence of methods of scaling and ranking. But as Nadel has pointed out, a role name is no mean guide because it is pre-scriptive, standing directly for the norms connected with a role. The role name also forms a part of the behaviour between actors in a defined situation, because it acts as a cue for the behaviour expected by role holders who are currently interacting. I therefore hold that on the basis of my observation of behaviour in the prayer-house, which includes the enactment of such diacritical signs as formal tokens of obedience, different styles of dress, and individual and collective reactions to an incorrect role performance, it is justifiable to isolate the attributes of a role by applying the role name.

Following this procedure, we can distinguish three principal roles in the prayer-house: those of elder, prophet or visioner, and floor member<sup>1</sup>. Elders, for instance, exercise their command over floor members by virtue of their status as ordained Serafim, which vests them with the right to command the obedience of those junior to them on the floor. Their authority is based on the experience and wisdom with which senior elders are attributed, their seniority of age, and fictitious kinship attribute of "father" to the flock of floor members. Prophets and

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1. Owing to the need for brevity, I have omitted any discussion of this role which is structurally less differentiated than those of elder and man of God. I discuss the characteristics of the role of floor member in connection with the prayer-house in Chapter 2, *et passim*.



visioners,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand base their role on the charismatic attributes derived from the gifts of visioning, praying and healing - in that order of importance. For the Order is a revelatory aladura church which emphasises the charismatic gift of visioning and prophesying above others. The ability to vision is, therefore, the basic or pivotal attribute of the role of man of God; visioners share the attributes of praying and healing with the elders. These make up the lesser or optional attributes of an elder's role, since they are not an integral part of his role performance. But by praying powerfully elders gain much prestige in the prayer-house,

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1. Another expression which will be used to refer to prophets and visioners is that of "man of God", which expresses their role as God's mouthpieces. Serafim in Onitsha speak of their men of God as "God's mouths".

Although Serafim use the terms visioner and prophet interchangeably, it is necessary to define the exact connotations of these words. Both have the same abilities of visioning, praying and healing; but prophets are supposed to become steadily more experienced in the ways of the Spirit the longer their work goes on. A prophet's esteem is based on the extent to which he can go on issuing self-fulfilling prophecies over a long period of time.

A prophecy is a message from the Holy Spirit referring to dramatic events which will befall the congregation or the nation; it must be fulfilled. A vision is a message from the Spirit which generally concerns more trivial matters as collective or individual disobedience in the prayer-house. Such revelations, which may or may not be fulfilled, are more mundane than prophecies. See Chapter 4 (pp.162-168), where I discuss the gifts of the Spirit further.

In this study I shall be using the word prophet to indicate a paid employee of the prayer-house, whose job is to specialise in the powers of the Spirit without the distractions of going to work in the market or office. By visioner, I mean a non-paid employee who is either a floor member or junior elder, and is gifted with the powers of the Spirit. A Serafim who is, for instance, a floor member and is recognised as a man of God, therefore holds two roles.

since like the ideal Seraf they unite both secular and charismatic qualities in their behaviour.

Having established the reality of different sets of attributes which compose different roles, we can differentiate between roles and sub-roles. In order to forestall any objections about an unnecessary proliferation of terms, it should be remembered that the utility of the concept of roles lies in its precision. As Dorothy Emmet has recently mentioned, there is little to be gained by using the term so loosely that it includes everything from passing relations on the mammy waggon to structured relationships between man and wife (D. Emmet, 1966, p.168). Apart from the fact that temporary contacts are the very obverse of the generally accepted meaning of roles as regular patterns of conduct, the word relations covers such fleeting contacts adequately enough.

Regarding the prayer-house, there are three reasons why I have limited the term role to those of elder, prophet or visioner, and floor member. Firstly, these roles have well defined and wide ranging attributes, a set of general rights and duties, and modes of behaviour expected of all persons holding the same role. Thus, all elders are entitled to the staff and girdle of office; all elders are entrusted with the obligation to care for the welfare of the congregation, having specific functions in the prayer-house; and all elders are expected to behave with moral propriety as befits those acting as "fathers" towards prayer-receivers or the floor. Secondly, the status associated with the role of elder, for instance, influences the conduct of those with whom they

interact outside the prayer-house. As we will see in Chapter 7, elders appear to obtain positions in secular associations as a result of their standing as elders in a recognised aladura church. Thus, the three principal roles have the characteristic "halo" effect spoken of by Nadel (ibid, p.28), in that the very fact of holding the role of elder, for example, influences the performance of other roles. Finally, as we have seen, the roles of elder and prophet or visioner are dependent upon a particular type of authority, which legitimises the holder's right to command those below him.

It is possible to differentiate between two kinds of sub-roles. There are those which are carved out of the role of elder; and those of secretary, treasurer, choir leader and the like which are held in relation to a committee, praying band or society within the prayer-house. The distinguishing feature of the latter type of sub-role is that the rights and duties of holders are very limited and do not extend beyond the province of the committee, society or band. Whereas sub-roles as these may and do confer prestige with members, particularly those in the immediate circle of the holder, they do not affect the behaviour and standing of Serafim in the various fields of activity outside the prayer-house.

The sub-roles with which I am concerned at the moment are those carved out of the role of elder: they are legitimised in terms of the customary authority of elders which legitimises their role. It was these sub-roles, which confer specific spheres of control, that gradually emerged as relationships in the Order differentiated over the years. Since I

discuss this process in the next chapter, it is enough to say that today there is a fixed number of sub-roles, each one conferring a particular set of rights and duties. Aladuras, for instance, hold the most junior of these sub-roles: their duties are to lead the congregation in prayer. The most senior sub-role is that of Baba Aladura or praying-father: he is the spiritual father of all Serafim, who vets all senior ordinations and acts as the chairman of the governing body of the Eternal Sacred Order.

Thus far I have examined the concept of role as denoting a cluster of behavioural and normative attributes, which sums up the ideal conduct expected of holders. I mentioned earlier (see pp.28-30) that the roles of elder and man of God were distinguished by the types of authority upon which they are based. The concept of charismatic authority is a crucial tool, because it enables us to mark out the cleavage in the role structure between the men of God and the secular elders or floor members<sup>1</sup>. I shall therefore now define exactly what is meant by this and the two other kinds of authority, which sanction roles in the Order and prayer-house.

The operative types of authority are those relating to charismatic, customary and bureaucratic norms. To begin with the concept of charismatic authority, which is modelled on the spiritual gifts exercised by the founder, Moses Orimolade Tunolashe. Tunolashe himself proved by miracles, strong prayer and visions that he had exceptional powers, which were

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1. This distinction is also made by Serafim in the prayer-house. The prophets, who are paid employees of the prayer-house, are notably self-conscious about their spiritual functions which they contrast unfavourably with the administrative tasks allocated to the elders.

initially regarded by his followers as being "of divine origin" (M. Weber, 1947, pp.358-359). I shall therefore limit the term charismatic authority to the spiritual powers wielded by men of God, who achieve this role when they act out the behaviour expected of prophets and visioners in the prayer-house<sup>1</sup>. However, the ability to vision, pray powerfully and heal must be maintained over some period of time for an individual to be regarded as a visioner: if his powers fail, he is ignored should he go on trying to behave like a man of God. Unlike elders, who are initiated into the behaviour expected of them by the ritual of ordination, the men of God are accorded their role by the congregation when they have proved that they do indeed possess these spiritual gifts. The role of visioner leads to ordination into the lowest of the elders' sub-roles, because new recruits who are most prone to experience the power of the Spirit are always floor members.

The very name visioner indicates that this role is based on the charismatic authority derived from visioning and prophesying. In this

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1. It might be thought that an equally suitable term could be that of religious authority. However, not only does this concept refer very generally and loosely to anything sanctioned by God or supernatural beings, but it also misses the entire point of the personal and pentecostal talents written into the role of man of God. Charismatic powers are exercised by individuals on the basis of their unique spiritual gifts. In spite of the emergence of a specific cluster of attributes making up the role of man of God, the peculiarly personal element in the exercise of this role emerges in the revolutionary actions of visioners and prophets. A good example is the fairly common challenge by the men of God to the elders who, the Spirit alleges, are bickering or acting in an immoral way which is "hated by the Spirit", as Serafim say.

revelatory aladura church the attributes of healing and praying take second place in the visioner's role to the gift of seeing things. Like the men of God, the elders' role includes the gifts of praying and healing, but as optional attributes.

An important point about charismatic authority is that it stems directly from interaction between Serafim. It was when men and women in Lagos recognised that Tunolashe was a prophet in 1925, that he gathered followers who hearkened unto their self-elected leader. Authority based on charismatic powers is not only achieved, but is also particular to the community of members, who make up the prayer-house or the adherents of the Order<sup>1</sup>; it is only relevant in the context of behaviour between Serafim, from whence it originates when men of God exercise their powers.

The concept of customary authority is, however, rather different. As Max Weber has pointed out, customary (or traditional) authority in its pure form refers to the sanctity of a system of social relationships, because of the fact that it has "always existed" (M. Weber, 1947, p.341)<sup>2</sup>. The name elder was in all probability first used by Serafim at Lagos in 1926. And as the name implies, elders claim obedience because they fulfill certain customary criteria, which were initially associated with

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1. From the accounts we have of aladura churches and prophet movements, this is also obviously true of them. But I am here solely concerned with the Eternal Sacred Order.
  2. Weber was thinking more in terms of the general sanctity of tradition, rather than the ascribed criteria usually associated with positions of authority in the lineage.

traditional institutions in Yoruba<sup>1</sup>, and then Ibo society<sup>2</sup> when the Order was established there. Although the role of elder is legitimised by customary concepts of seniority, no Serafim automatically holds the role of elder because he is, for example, an old man. A Serafim is ordained an elder when he has proved that he fulfils certain achieved criteria as virtuous behaviour, knowledge of liturgy and punctilious attendance at the prayer-house. The ritual of ordination legitimises the right of an elder to hold this role. Nevertheless, the authority of an elder is based on the following customary criteria: the fictitious kinship attribute of acting as a father<sup>3</sup> to the flock, seniority of age, and the acquired wisdom of long service in the Order.

Unlike charismatic authority, which is achieved by individuals acting within the context of Serafim belief in the pentecostal powers of

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1. The agbole, or compound of extended families who recognise a common head, is the residential unit of a minor segment of the patrilineage. Elders or agba are men who achieve the rank of agba on account of their age seniority, and seniority of birth and marriage (see D. Forde, 1951, p.11).
  2. In Iboland the localised patrilineage which occupies a hamlet, several of which make up a village, is called umunna or children of the father. Local authority in the hamlet and village is vested in a council of lineage elders. The lineage priest is always the senior male by birth; but wealth played some part as well as seniority by birth and age in determining local leadership (see also D. Forde and G. Jones, 1950, p.17 and p.20).
  3. Like Yoruba kinship terminology, which emphasises generation differences and relative seniority among kinsmen of the same generation, so do Ibos apply a variety of terms to indicate these distinctions. The word nnā which means father is extended to ego's father's brothers as nnā ukwu; and in more general context old men in the village are addressed as nnā, indicating respect on the part of a junior.

the Spirit, customary criteria of authority were integrated into the role structure from without the Order. The behaviour expected of elders is relevant to the lineage and the prayer-house; their status in the prayer-house can be and is acknowledged by outsiders, as we will see in Chapter 7.

Finally, there is the concept of bureaucratic authority which legitimises roles when, as today in the Order, role attributes are independent of the holder, and spheres of control are allocated to each sub-role on a permanent basis<sup>1</sup>. The precise tasks and responsibilities of sub-role holders are now defined in writing, and are imposed upon all new ordinands. Whereas the two criteria of authority which I have just discussed are associated with two kinds of roles, bureaucratic norms underwrite the role structure as a whole; and are common to every role in the Order and prayer-house.

Having explained the way in which the three types of authority legitimise roles, I should now add that the cleavage between the roles of elder, man of God and floor member is cut across by other principles of organisation. It has just been pointed out that bureaucratic norms, which have only recently been imposed, authorise sub-role ranking and objectify role attributes. And then the roles of elder and man of God are linked on the normative level, because elders also hold the lesser attributes of praying and healing, which form the pivotal attributes of the visioner's role. The charismatic gifts of healing and praying are

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1. See Max Weber (1947, p.328) for the classic analysis of bureaucratic authority.



achieved at the ordination ritual. For all candidates are blessed and - if they are senior elders - annointed by the Baba Aladura, who thus confers the legitimising charisma of the founder. At the lower level of the role hierarchy, the role of visioner can be combined with the role of floor member or junior elder by individuals gifted with the power of the Spirit.

Furthermore, all Serafim are united by their acceptance of the ultimate goals of the Order and prayer-house: to preach the gospel of prayer, to follow in the footsteps of the prophet Tunolashe who revealed God anew, and to live the good life which is based on the scriptures. The Bible, in particular, is a source of divine inspiration and authority which justifies the very existence of the Order, as well as the more minor ethics of daily life. To this extent then, role holders are linked by those normative attributes which are common to their roles, and by the ultimate values accepted by all Serafim.

### Recapitulation

In the Introduction I have put forward the argument of the thesis, and the main factors of analysis to be applied in connection with this study of role behaviour in the prayer-house at Fegge, Onitsha. My basis<sup>c</sup> approach is both structural and processual, since I will be examining roles from two points of view. To begin with, the thesis explains how the present system of relationships emerged, the principal features of the role structure, and the institutions of authority and control. From there I go on to analyse processes of strain and conflict in the prayer-

house; and the relationship between the membership and occupational roles of Serafim in the social field of Onitsha. We should then be in a position to assess the exact nature of the structure of the prayer-house in relation to the social field of which it is a part, and to explain the dynamics of changing relationships among Serafim.

Since I have organised this study of an aladura church around the concept of roles, which are composed of clusters of behavioural and normative attributes, it follows that we should distinguish between analysis on the levels of belief and behaviour. The connection between norms which prescribe the mode of conduct expected of role-holders, and their actual behaviour, will become apparent when I look at methods of control, and examples of strain and conflict in the prayer-house.

We have seen that there are three types of general roles in the Order and prayer-house; and that the role of elder is broken down into smaller and more limited clusters of attributes that form sub-roles. The fundamental principle behind the organisation of relationships is the structural cleavage between the roles of elder and man of God. Whereas the role of elder is based on pivotal attributes associated with customary authority, that of man of God is orientated around the exercise of charismatic powers. Thus, there is built-in strain between the revolutionary approach of visioners and prophets, and the duties of secular elders to maintain the status quo in the prayer-house. Nevertheless, role relationships between elders, men of God, and floor members are knit together by the common interest of all Serafim in obtaining spiritual

power to resolve their material problems; by the ultimate goals of members; and by the ultimate values of the Order, which are sanctioned by the word of God in the scriptures and by the charisma of the founder, which is now conferred on ordinands in the ritual of ordination.

Having outlined the analytical framework within which this study of the prayer-house at Fegge, Onitsha, will be conducted, it is time to look at the way in which the charisma of the founder of the Eternal Sacred Order was routinised.

## CHAPTER 1<sup>1</sup>

### The Routinisation of Charisma in the Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Serafim, Lagos: 1925-1966

Like any other prophet movement, the early Serafim were temporarily knit together by the personal charisma of their prophet and founder - Moses Orimolade Tunolashe. In his classic study of charismatic authority Max Weber argued forcibly that the emergence of a durable system of relationships is dependent upon two related processes: the routinisation of the founder's charisma, and of the functions of the personnel supervising the following (M. Weber, 1947, p.371). The key problem in routinisation is posed by the succession to the deceased prophet's role. Once the methods of designating a successor are accepted and institutionalised at this central point of the organisation, the everyday routines of customary and bureaucratic authority can be applied throughout. In the case of the Order, it was the resolution of the succession problem which made way for the establishment of bureaucratic criteria of authority.

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1. My sources for this chapter are drawn from interviews with the senior elders of the Eternal Sacred Order, who were all early members of the Serafim - Baba Aladura Olugbusi, Deputy Baba Aladura Ogunayde and Senior Apostle General J.O. Coker. Written material includes the court cases mentioned in the Preface; the three publications and the many circulars of the Order also mentioned in the Preface; the All Nigerian Prayerman's Pamphlet, 1965; a pamphlet written by one Apostle Akinola on the early members; and information given by Robert Mitchell of North Western University on the basis of his interviews in 1962 with some of the early Serafim.

The chapter falls into two parts. I begin with the career of Tunolashe as a prophet, the nature of his charisma which began to fail only two years after his followers had recognised him, and the way in which the attributes of his role shifted during his career as a prophet. In the second part I examine the processes whereby relations in the Order were gradually structured into a series of differentiated relationships; and I also consider the steps taken to solve the succession problem between 1959 and 1962.

My intention in tracing out the stages and processes involved in the routinisation of the prophet's charisma is to give an account of how this critical development occurred in a particular aladura church; and to examine the role structure of the Order which was taken up by the new branch at Fegge, Onitsha, in the years following 1949. It would be impossible to understand the way in which relations within the Fegge prayer-house influenced the development of roles there, without explaining beforehand the principal features of the role structure of the Order as a national organisation. This chapter therefore introduces us to the roles of the Order, which will be analysed in depth in the field of relations presented by the prayer-house at Fegge.

#### The Call of the Evangelist, Tunolashe: 1916-1925

Moses Orimolade Tunolashe was born in Ikare, Ondo province, in Yorubaland sometime during the 1880's to pagan parents. His mother became converted to Christianity in the following decade; and Tunolashe himself had close contacts throughout his career with the African churches

which began to evangelise seriously in Ondo province during this time.

The first we hear of Tunolashe at work is in 1916, when two Methodist ministers came upon him preaching to a crowd in the bush at Ikare. Impressed, they asked Tunolashe to come and work for the Methodist mission at Lokoja in the northern region of Nigeria. And it was at a stream outside Lokoja that the lame illiterate prophet received the first sign that he had been called by God. While bathing, he felt a hidden being near him and was miraculously healed of much of his lameness.

For the next few years until 1924, Tunolashe preached widely in the northern and western regions of Nigeria, associating himself loosely with such denominations as the Church Missionary Society, the Methodists and the African churches. In 1924 the evangelist received a message from God that unless he went to Lagos, there would be terrible floods. This was the time when Tunolashe's claim to be recognised as a prophet<sup>1</sup> began to come about. For some of his early followers have affirmed that "many women and men (went to) see him because they know him by his prophecy" (interview, Baba Aladura Olugbusi of the Order, June 14, 1965). But it took his wonderful healing of a young Yoruba girl, Abiodun Akinsowun, to bring him full acclaim as a prophet with the three charismatic powers of healing, prophesying and praying<sup>2</sup>.

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1. According to Weber, it is the duty of adherents to recognise the charisma of the prophet which is proved by miraculous signs (M. Weber, 1948, p.359).
  2. The fourth power of speaking with tongues was a later development when the Pentecostal sects of England and America had arrived in Nigeria during the 1930's (H. Turner, 1967, vol.2, p.129). However, speaking with tongues is a gift which is regarded with caution in the Order, because it is open to obvious manipulation by unscrupulous men of God.

Tunolashe was called to heal Abiodun in June, 1925. A member of the Church Missionary Society, she had fallen into a deep trance having seen angels, and it was her "spiritual father" Tunolashe (ibid), who cured her by answering correctly the three Biblical questions she put to him. Afterwards "many rushed to see them" (interview by Robert Mitchell of North Western University on January 25, 1962). And so the two set up a "Christian Band" for the purpose of tapping the power of the Spirit by prayer. Angels were then able to speak through prophets who healed, prophesied the future and granted spiritual protection against witchcraft. The main concern of Tunolashe and Abiodun was to fight against witchcraft, which is "the cause of all diseases and sickness" (Report on the Cherubim and Serafim by the Acting Inspector General of Police, 1931, no.27103, S/5, p.9).

Tunolashe the prophet and elder: 1925-1933

After his healing of Abiodun which followed the prophecy of 1924, Tunolashe's career entered a new phase in which, as a proven man of God, he was surrounded by an expanding following. The first step in the future development of the role structure of the Order occurred in September 1925. The "Christian Band", set up by Tunolashe and Abiodun after the miracle of Corpus Christi, was named by vision as the Praying Band of Serafim. The word Cherubim was added in 1927, thus giving the Praying Band of Cherubim and Serafim its full name. After the naming of the society it appears that Tunolashe gradually became known as the "Baba Aladura" or praying father: that is, the prophet was seen by his followers

as a charismatic figure and secular elder.

At the same time the informal relations between Serafim started to become more stereotyped as formal titles emerged, which indicated the behaviour expected of those addressed by a particular name. The first title was that of "aladura" (meaning praying) which was applied to the seventy-five members of the "egbe aladura" (or, praying band) appointed by the prophet in late 1925. In early 1926 when Serafim set out on their first evangelical campaign into the Yoruba hinterland, the men and women who played a leading part were called "leader" by Tunolashe (interview Baba Aladura Olugbusi, March 31, 1965). Abiodun herself became known as "captain"; this title was a mark of affection and respect for her strenuous work on these tours. Since Abiodun was the leading woman Seraf she was also called "general mother", indicating that she was in charge of the women (ibid). As we will see later, some of the qualities expected of those persons addressed as "aladura" or "leader" were eventually formalised into the sub-roles of aladura and leader.

During the early years of the Praying Band, internal differentiation proceeded in <sup>yet</sup> another direction: the behavioural attributes associated with the external roles of sex and age were used to establish sub-bands and more titles. Those members of the Praying Band, for instance, who had joined up first called themselves elder to draw attention to their position as foundation members, and their seniority of age over younger Serafim. The twelve oldest men were organised into the sub-band of Praying Patriarchs in December, 1925; and the next year young men formed the sub-bands of



Fogo and Army of Salvation. Women too had their own bands and titles, such as that of "lady leader".

In those days, new recruits joined one of two sub-praying bands for both sexes and all age-groups on entering the Serafim (Articles of Association of the Eternal Sacred Order, 1930, p.2). The praying band of Serafim was founded in 1925 when the society was named, and that of Cherubim in 1927 when the name Cherubim was added. The bands of Cherubim and Serafim are the only mixed-sex groups that span both older and younger generations.

Tunolashe himself was active throughout these early years participating in the visions which authorised the naming of the society, the white dresses of the "egbe aladura", the use of candles and incense and heavenly forms of dancing when worshipping God. Tunolashe's charisma, which stemmed from his miracle of 1925, legitimised the new titles and sub-bands, but additional justification was provided by the scriptures.

The most significant event for the future development of the Order's role structure came in 1927 when Tunolashe ordained the first four Apostles. By praying over the Apostles, giving them his blessing and showing them to the congregation,<sup>1</sup> Tunolashe established the rudiments of the ordination ritual as it exists today. This early ordination was also

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1. I have no first-hand account of how this ordination was carried out. But it is more than likely that Tunolashe acted as he did when he appointed Onanuga as his successor in 1933, by blessing him, showing him to Serafim and giving Onanuga his robes ("Ojokoro", p.2). Furthermore, as Tunolashe's nephew said in court: "Moses appointed Apostles from the Bible" (suit no.LD/635/61), indicating that they were appointed as Stephen and Philip were by the early Apostles in Acts vi 5-6.

important because it was the first time that Tunolashe formally appointed elders. The Apostles' authority to carry out their duties of evangelisation<sup>1</sup> derived from the charisma of the prophet, which he had transferred by blessing and showing them to the public. Their position was senior to that of leaders, but below that of the Baba Aladura, Tunolashe. This was, infact, the first elder's sub-role.

After 1926 it apparently became evident that no more dramatic miracles or prophecies were forthcoming from Tunolashe, who was increasingly absorbed in the problems of dealing with his leading followers<sup>2</sup>. As the founder's charismatic gifts began to diminish, it seems likely that he began to emphasise the criteria of authority associated with the title of elder or "father"<sup>3</sup>. Another trend which favoured this development was

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1. The duties of evangelisation were shared by all Serafim at this time. The present Senior Apostle General and the Deputy Baba Aladura were then leaders appointed to evangelise in the Yoruba hinterland (interview, Senior Apostle General J.O. Coker, June 14, 1965). I have no precise information on the exact duties of the first four Apostles, but it seems fair to deduce that as their name indicated, they were charged with the tasks of evangelism like the first twelve Apostles of the early Church. The pamphlet "The Order" (1960's, p.11) cites Mathew x 1-6 as biblical justification for the evangelical duties of Apostles.
  2. After 1925, we have no other record of startling miracles by Tunolashe: his powers were, therefore, on the wane. This meant that the very basis of his charismatic authority was eroded by his eclipse as a powerful man of God. At the same time, others had acquired the gifts of visioning and healing, thus presenting a challenge to the personal authority of Tunolashe, because their visions could be regarded as the equal of their founder's.
  3. This is my own deduction based on the following factors: the decline of Tunolashe's charismatic powers, allegations that he was too autocratic, the implications of the title father, and the rapidly growing membership which made personal contact between the founder and his flock more difficult.

the rapid growth in the numbers of Serafim, who counted between three to eight thousand by 1927 to 1928 (interview, *ibid*; J. Peel, 1966, pp.130-131). In the conditions created by a fast expanding membership, it is more than probable that the already diminished authority of the founder's failing charismatic gifts was supplemented by the more general and less personal authority of elderhood.

As the Praying Band of Serafim grew in numbers more leaders emerged, competing against each other in the absence of any effective control by the prophet. As the personal and close relations between the early members did not dissolve, several cliques competed for influence over Serafim, rivalling each other for the ear of the Baba Aladura. The two principal factions were led by Abiodun and E.A. Davies respectively (Report on the Cherubim and Serafim by the Acting Inspector General of Police, 1931, no.27102, S/5, pp.10-11). When Tunolashe ordained the first four Apostles - his personal nominees - he offended the most influential of his self-styled "advisers". These were men like E.A. Davies and the Phillips brothers who, as educated clerks and foundation members, had set up an Executive Committee which was to run the affairs of the society (suit no.LD/635/61 in the High Court of Lagos; and suit no.LD/194/59 in the Divisional Court of Lagos). The Baba Aladura's attempts to control the Committee were received with hostility, and he was accused of being autocratic.

In 1928 the events which led up to the first split with Tunolashe got underway when a visioner under the influence of the Executive Committee

visioned that the Baba Aladura's protege, Abiodun, was not to ride with him in his go-kart, because she was not "holy" (interview, Baba Aladura Olugbusi, March 31 1965). Already infuriated by Tunolashe's possible marriage to an Ijebu girl, Abiodun quarreled with the prophet and the Committee. The members of the Executive Committee then persuaded Tunolashe to get rid of Abiodun by taking her to the police. Although Tunolashe cut off Abiodun and her eight hundred followers, the Committee continued to disobey Tunolashe so he left them and their seven hundred followers<sup>1</sup>. Only thirty members went with the prophet.

The quarrels of 1928 took place for three reasons. Tunolashe's loss of charismatic powers meant that presumably many Serafim did not accept his authority to command their obedience. Others could also vision and pray with effect: Abiodun herself was the outstanding visioner among the early Serafim (ibid). Secondly the lack of established institutions for settling disputes, and the ease with which the visioners could be manipulated by leading Serafim, meant that the ambitions of the Committee could not be contained. Finally, the difference in education and occupation between the Committee and the illiterate prophet provided an additional irritation, which was used to rationalise and justify the split.

By 1930, Tunolashe had registered his section as the Eternal Sacred Order, fourteen subscribers making up an Advisory Board which was

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1. These figures given by Baba Aladura Olugbusi (March 31 1965) are only approximate, since other sources indicate that about 300 to 400 members went with the Executive Committee while Tunolashe took about 200 Serafim with him (communication by Robert Mitchell of North Western University).

to advise the Baba Aladura and run the Order in the event of an inter-regnum (Articles of Association of the Order, 1930, p.3). Nothing much happened until 1933 when the prophet at Ojokoro, a plantation near Lagos, blessed as his successor Elder Onanuga, the oldest of his followers and one of the earliest "leaders". It was at this point that Tunolashe's charisma was reaffirmed by the Lord, for three wonderful things happened: stars rose from east to west, white birds hovered over the grave during the interment, and a visioner prophesied Tunolashe's death to the very day ("Ojokoro", p.2).

#### The Unfolding Role of Tunolashe the Prophet-Elder: 1925-1933

When Tunolashe was noticed by the Methodist missionaries in 1916 at Ikare, he was even then acting as an evangelist preaching the word of God. Loosely attached to various denominations where he had contacts with pastors and catechists who befriended him, Tunolashe seems to have been known as an advocate of the power of prayer against man's ills and a minor visioner in the years before 1925. We have reports that he set up a small prayer-house in Ilorin, northern Nigeria, in the early 1920's (J. Peel, 1966, p.104); and that he was giving visions for money after he came to Lagos in 1924 (Reported by one Ege, an early Serafim, to Robert Mitchell of North Western University in 1962).

The critical events of 1924 to 1925, which provided Tunolashe with a situation that facilitated his recognition as a prophet, were the prophecy of 1924 and the healing of Abiodun in 1925. The prophecy must be set in the context of the drought of that year, and the bubonic plague

epidemics that continued until 1928. Once he was known by his prophecy and healing of Abiodun, Tunolashe gained additional attributes which were integrated with those of his earlier role as an evangelist. The additional attributes were the power of effective prayer, of healing and of prophesying. After mid-1925 when people rushed to see Tunolashe and Abiodun, the pivotal attributes of charismatic authority displaced the behaviour expected of an evangelist, preacher and man of prayer. These attributes now formed the lesser elements of his role as a prophet. Thus, Tunolashe's career should be seen as one of continuous development, as the events of 1924 and 1925 added the new pivotal characteristics of widely acknowledged charismatic powers.

As people flocked to see Tunolashe after the Corpus Christi miracle, he was faced with a new situation. Up to now the prophet had been only loosely attached to various denominations who gave him food, a roof over his head and friendly encouragement. But after the founding and naming of the praying band in September 1925, Tunolashe had to adjust his personal authority to a new situation. Now there were regular services for worship by all Serafim, relations began to be differentiated, and ambitious men rose to positions of influence in the Praying Band. Then there was the additional problem of Abiodun who, although loyal to Tunolashe for the first year or so, began to gather many of her own followers on account of her powerful visioning abilities.

At the same time as Tunolashe was acting out his role as a prophet within this problematical situation, people began to address him as father

so that he became known as the praying father. This step indicated that some kind of tentative means for organising relations was developing; one of which was the fact that the founder was recognised as the most senior of the elders. As well as acting as the father of his flock, taking up the customary attributes of authority which sanction the ability of older men to command others, Tunolashe continued to exert the gifts of visioning and praying, authorising the creation of new dresses, staffs of office, sub-bands and the like.

The possible structure of Tunolashe's role as a prophet-elder is shown in Table 1.1 which indicates the shift in the attributes defining his role between 1916 to 1925, and 1925 to 1926.

Table 1.1    The Role of Tunolashe the Prophet-Elder: 1916-1926

	<u>Evangelist</u> 1916+	<u>Prophet</u> 1925+	<u>Elder</u> 1926+
<u>Pivotal</u> <u>Attributes</u>	Preacher  Prayer	Charisma of healing  Charisma of prophesying  Charisma of praying	Status seniority of founder Older man  Father
<u>Lesser</u> <u>Attributes</u>		———— Preacher ————  ———— Pastor ————	

That Tunolashe failed to renew his charismatic authority by performing more startling miracles or by issuing dramatic prophecies, is indicated by the speed with which the ambitious elders on the Executive Committee were able to challenge their founder. But although the majority

of Tunolashe's followers rejected him, those who stayed with him - for whatever reason - demonstrated their former allegiance to the failing prophet on the basis of his earlier works. For them, the legitimacy of Tunolashe's charisma was validated anew by the three miraculous events which accompanied his death in 1933. And after this, some of the dissident elders on the former Executive Committee, as well as Abiodun, attempted to come together with Tunolashe's true followers saying that they knew they had erred (interview, Baba Aladura Olugbusi, June 14 1965)<sup>1</sup>.

During these years relations between Serafim were sufficiently fluid for prophets to live free in Tunolashe's house, subsisting like the Baba Aladura on the gifts brought by followers (ibid). There was no organised method for financing the society, and several Serafim are known to have proclaimed themselves "leaders" or "Apostles" according to the dictates of the Spirit<sup>2</sup>. But the movement attracted the antagonism of the Church Missionary Society and the Methodists who declared that the "excesses" of the Serafim were a menace<sup>3</sup>. It was not until after 1928

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1. This claim is confirmed by accounts of the attempts to unite the various sections of Cherubim and Serafim, which were given in court cases no.LD/635/63 and LD/294/59 at Lagos.
  2. As was, for instance, the present Deputy Baba Aladura Ogunyade, who called himself an Apostle in 1934 after Tunolashe's death - he was then only a "leader" (interview, Senior Apostle General J.O. Coker June 14, 1965). There were also seven "Apostles" who had not been ordained by Tunolashe (J. Peel, 1966, p.131).
  3. Quoted in Turner, 1967, vol.I, p.15, footnote 1; the Synod also said that it was purely superstitious to rely on visions, as the Serafim did.



that leading members like Abiodun stopped attending their former place of worship. The Praying Band was only loosely organised, mainly on the basis of personal allegiance to Tunolashe and then to the several leaders who became prominent. But the movement begun by Tunolashe had gathered sufficient momentum for it to continue after his death.

The Process of Role Differentiation in the Eternal Sacred Order: 1934-1959

After the death of Tunolashe, his followers began to quarrel about who was actually the legitimate successor. This raised the issue of what were the criteria legitimising the appointment of a Baba Aladura. For while Tunolashe had called Onanuga to succeed him by personal designation, he had apparently also blessed his senior brother, Peter Omojola, at an earlier ceremony in 1930 (Suit no.LD/635/61). Following Max Weber (1947, pp.364-366), we can isolate four criteria of legitimacy, three of which were present in one of the above appointments. In the case of Onanuga he had been chosen personally by Tunolashe, accepted by the prophet's followers and ritually initiated. Omojola, on the other hand, shared these three qualifications but also had a fourth. This was that of the hereditary transmission of charisma on account of his position as Tunolashe's senior brother. Owing to the absence of institutionalised procedures, the two criteria of personal designation and hereditary transmission of charisma were of the utmost importance. The two potentially impersonal procedures of ritual initiation and acceptance by the staff of the Order were of no real significance.

Since Onanuga and his section refused to recognise the legitimacy

of Omojola's claim to be Baba Aladura, the two groups separated, leaving Onanuga with only two members of the Advisory Board as it had been constituted in 1930. The rest went with Omojola into Koro Agbede at Hotonou street; and Onanuga repaired to Ebutte-Metta, founding Mt. Zion. (The various sections are shown in Chart I on the next page<sup>1</sup>.) Nevertheless, the way in which the dispute to the succession was conducted showed that it was not the legitimacy of the founder's charisma that was in question<sup>2</sup>. Rather, the problem was one of deciding what criteria legitimised an appointment.

The first step in elaborating the series of sub-roles which are associated with the general role of elder was taken in 1933 when Onanuga ordained Evangelists, "to baptise members" and to preach the word of the God of Tunolashe abroad. Previously leaders had been evangelists as well, but now they were only to lead the congregation in prayer together with the Aladuras, who were also created in 1933. The baptismal duties of Evangelists were later allocated to the sub-role of Pastor which first developed during the 1930's. The first Senior Apostles were ordained in 1937, and the more senior role of Senior Apostle General emerged by 1947.

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1. Chart I on page 54 is based on the following sources: The All Nigerian Prayerman's Pamphlet (1965); a pamphlet written by one Apostle Akinola of "the Eternal Sacred Order"; "Ojokoro" by the Advisory Board (1960's); and interviews with the senior elders at Mt. Zion. I also included four churches given in J. Peel's chart of some of the Cherubim and Serafim sections (see J. Peel, 1966, p.483).
  2. See footnote 1, page 51. J.A. Phillips, one of the leading lights of the Executive Committee, who established the "Praying Band of the Sacred Society of the Cherubim and Serafim" in 1929 at Ita Balogun Square, came to Mt. Zinn soon after Tunolashe's death. Phillips confessed that he had erred in offending the Baba Aladura.

## Chart I

Cherubim and Serafim Sections: 1925-1966Western Nigeria"Egbe Serafu": 1925

Praying Band  
of Sacred  
Society of Cherubim  
and Serafim: "Iba Balogun"  
1929 (H.A. and J.A.  
Phillips)

"The Western Conference"  
1931

Captain  
Abiodun  
1929

Eternal Sacred Order  
of Cherubim + Serafim  
(Tunolashé) 1930

New Eden  
Light of  
Jesus  
1964

Holy Flock  
of Christ  
(A. Lawrence)  
1932

Holy Cherubim  
& Serafim Society  
(E.A. Dada)  
1934

Idapo  
Mimo  
1937  
(G.O. Bada)

Koro Agbede  
(P. Omojola)  
1934

Mt. Zion  
(Onanuga)  
1934

Orimolade  
Missionary  
Society  
1948

United Church  
of Cherubim  
and  
Serafim  
1948-54

Sacred Cherubim  
and Serafim Society  
of Nigeria: "Agege"  
(J.A. Phillips) 1952

Macarthy Street  
(Ogunyade)  
1942-1962

1962

The Railwayline  
(E.A. Johnson)  
1939

Eastern Nigeria

Cherubim and Serafim Society

"The Eastern Conference"

[S.O. Coker]  
1949-52

Sacred Order of  
Cherubim & Serafim Society  
(Aba) 1945

Sacred Cherubim and  
Serafim Church  
(Abana) 1962

The Divine Order of  
Cherubim & Serafim  
[Awodeyi] 1965

Eternal Sacred Order  
of Cherubim & Serafim  
[E.O. Coker] 1949 (Enugu)

Eternal Sacred Order of  
Morning Star and St.  
Michael Star  
[E.O. Coker] 1962

Table 1.2 shows the sub-role system as it existed by the late 1940's and illustrates the ad hoc way in which the nine sub-roles emerged. The full complement of sub-roles for men today is twelve at the headquarters, Mt. Zion, not counting that of Baba Aladura.

Table 1.2<sup>1</sup>     The sub-roles of male elders in the Order, Mt. Zion: 1934-1947

<u>Sub-role</u>	<u>Date Established</u>
Senior Apostle General	1947
Senior Apostle	1930's
Apostle	1927
*Prophet	1930's
Evangelist	1933
Pastor	1930's
Rabbi	1930's
Leader	1925
Aladura	1934

\* indicates sub-role only for prophets.

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The exact ranking of these roles in terms of spheres of control and responsibility did not become firm until the early 1960's. However, the fact that by the 1940's the duties and authority of the various elders were modelled after offices in the early Christian church, indicates that these sub-roles were part of an emerging role structure, in which Serafim with no formal rights and responsibilities were allocated the general role of floor member. The behaviour expected of floor members is that of an obedient junior kinsman, who respects the wisdom and experience of his seniors - the elders. In addition, to traditional concepts of seniority,

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1. My information for this Table is drawn from the following sources: the Daily Bible Reading Pamphlet of the Order, 1965; suit no. JDGA/135/59 in the Ijebu-Ode Grade A court; and interviews with Baba Aladura Olugbusi and Chancellor Otubu in 1965.



the authority of sub-role holders is also justified by the charisma of Tunolashe, which is transferred to elders in the ritual of ordination and annointment. It was Baba Aladura Onanuga who introduced the practice of annointing senior elders with holy oil in the 1940's, an innovation which emphasised the importance of ordination in ritualising the transition from one role to another. Thus, the promotion of a junior elder into the grade of senior or annointed elders is marked by a ritual which validates their new authority before the assembled congregation of Serafim.

During these years, sub-bands proliferated as the members increased at Mt. Zion, providing an important point of reference for the congregation while they were still ordinary floor members. And gradually the idea began to develop of a Baba Aladura ruling through a committee of elders; although Baba Aladura Onanuga and his successor, Adewunmi, only had an informally appointed committee of loyal Serafim. By the late 1940's, the present system of government in which the Baba Aladura is not directly associated with his cathedral church at Mt. Zion began to emerge. In 1947 the present Baba Aladura, Olugbusi, set up an Executive Committee to govern the Mt. Zion prayer-house. This Committee was the forerunner of the modern system of centralised administration by a hierarchy of committees. But until the early 1960's there was no formal link between the headquarters of the Order at Mt. Zion, and the branches in western and eastern Nigeria: this was one of the main reasons behind the perpetual factionalism in branches, which were easily persuaded by a rival section to secede. Local ties and personal loyalty to a prophet were the principal bonds uniting a prayer-house.

The Resolution of the Succession Problem: 1959-1962

The ruling in a court case in 1959 between Mt. Zion and Koro Agbede forced the senior elders to reconstitute the Advisory Board, which had been defunct up to then. In this way all the original subscribers, now six in number owing to deaths, would sit together again giving the Order a legal personality in law. After a temporary agreement between the two sections some of Koro Agbede, and all of Ogunyade's followers at MacCarthy Street reached a settlement with Mt. Zion in 1962, which satisfied the pre-conditions laid down by the judge in the case of 1959.

The main ruling of the judge was that in accordance with the constitution of the Eternal Sacred Order, as laid down in the Articles of Association of 1930, the Advisory Board was to both appoint and induct a Baba Aladura. Until this was done by a reconstituted Board, the present Baba Aladura at Mt. Zion was no more than "alagba" or elder. Thus, the earlier method whereby the Baba Aladura himself blessed and appointed his successor was overthrown. After 1962, the staff of the Board were empowered to elect a Baba Aladura whom they inducted and ordained by the ritual of annointment. The Order had at last arrived at the two impersonal methods of transferring the charisma of the founder to a successor: these are election by the Board, and ordination by recognised institutions of initiation.

Another step in the process of settling the succession was the return to the Order of the man whom Tunolashe had specifically pointed out, when dying, to carry out the ritual of ordination. After the reconsti-

tution of the Advisory Board in 1962, the sub-role of Senior Apostle General was specifically associated with the functions of a "chief-priest", so that on his death another will take up the role of Senior Apostle General as the new chief priest<sup>1</sup>.

### The Structure of Roles in the Order

With the establishment in law of impersonal procedures for electing and inducting a Baba Aladura, which were also recognised by Serafim, bureaucratic norms were integrated into the role Structure. After 1962, the duties and ranking of categories of sub-roles were stated formally in writing (see Chapter 2, p.81), and imposed by the elders. The normative attributes of roles in the Order are shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3      Role Norms in the Eternal Sacred Order After 1962

<u>Role</u>	<u>Charismatic</u>	<u>Norms</u> <u>Customary</u>	<u>Bureaucratic</u>
Elder	Charisma of prayer Charisma of healing (lesser)	Seniority of age Long experience and service "Father" to the flock (pivotal)	General ranking of all sub-roles and roles by defined criteria
Prophet and Visioner	Charisma of prayer Charisma of healing Charisma of prophecy (pivotal)	-	
Floor Member		Obedience and respect to elders	

1. This innovation should have the effect of enhancing the legitimacy of the ordination ritual because the Senior Apostle General is not now eligible to stand for the Baba Aladuraship (interview, Chancellor Otubu, June 19 1965; information also from elders in the eastern Conference).

Table 1.3 illustrates the point that today the criteria of customary and charismatic authority are associated respectively with the roles of elder and man of God. This system took over forty years to evolve, but the introduction of bureaucratic norms is only of recent origin. The idea of an impersonally ranked hierarchy of roles and committees has taken root, but personal loyalties to individual leaders work within the administration welding Serafim together -- or dividing them into factions.

Nevertheless, the principle is firmly established that once a Baba Aladura, for instance, has been ordained he is the only legitimate holder of that role. To this extent, then, the ritual of ordination is accepted as irreversible, because the criteria of designation are recognised by all Serafim. In the early days of the Praying Band of Serafim, when relations were not ordered in any way, the personal behaviour of a leader was totally identified with the duties indicated by his title. Today, the person of a role-holder is separated from the normative and behavioural attributes of his role. Immoral prophets or elders can be dismissed for conduct which abrogates the behaviour expected of them. But a Baba Aladura who fails to live up to the ideals of moral rectitude and honest administration can not be disciplined or removed by a board of senior elders. Instead, dissatisfied Serafim try to organise revolts against a "bad" Baba Aladura: such a revolt got under way in 1965 against the present praying father.

The absence of any peaceful means for replacing an inadequate



Baba Aladura is, therefore, a sign that the new system of administration by a governing body has not yet resulted in an appropriate reduction of the Baba Aladura's role to that of a typical chairman, who can be dismissed or made to resign by the Advisory Board. For the praying father is still conceived of more as a ritual figure than an elder, amenable to pressures from below. One solution which would complete the process of routinising Tunolashe's charisma is in the air. It is proposed<sup>1</sup> to insulate the Baba Aladura from all effective power, confining this sub-role to men who are over sixty-five. A successor would be appointed by the Board to be nominally responsible for the spiritual well-being of all Serafim. All political power would then be in the hands of the men controlling the Advisory Board.

Another indication that the Order has not yet achieved a stable adjustment between the routine relationships of a secular organisation, and the fluid personal relations which typify pure charismatic authority, is that loyalty to one leader played a critical part in the reconstitution of the Board. The resort to the law courts in order to find a way out of the then current impasse between contestants to the Baba Aladuraship in the late 1950's, was significant in itself. But what was more important was the way in which the judge's ruling was accepted by the Order. It was the man who is now Chancellor to the Order, G. Otubu, who persuaded leading Serafim to act by the decision of the court. Otubu also got the quarreling factions of Mt. Zion, MacCarthy Street and some members of

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1. This proposal, which has been made by Chancellor Otubu (interview, June 19 1965) is being taken up by other Serafim, particularly elders in the eastern Conference of the Order.

Koro Agbede to unite. Otubu's ability to carry through this policy was due to his popularity as an energetic and progressive man with a majority of the younger Yoruba elders, and all of the Ibo-dominated eastern Conference. Thus, the framework of a bureaucratic organisation is there. But personal ties of allegiance to an outstanding leader, who commands the patronage of influence, work within this structure to weld Serafim together.

As the new set-up in the Order after 1962 had the approval of a majority the Advisory Board, under the guidance of the Chancellor, was able to push through further reforms<sup>1</sup>. The drive to establish a modern machinery of administration, which continues today, was speeded up by the dispute about the Baba Aladura at headquarters in 1965 to 1966. This crisis, which was being contained, pointed out other areas where new procedures were necessary to accomodate pressures arising out of the popular demand for more control by the elders, and less by the nominal head of the Order - the Baba Aladura - and the Chancellor.

Nevertheless, the extent to which bureaucratic principles have been accepted at the lower levels of administration is shown by ordination procedures. It is not merely the succession to the Baba Aladuraship which has been routinised. In theory, and very often in practice, candidates for ordination are chosen on account of their moral virtue, conscientious work in the prayer-house, literacy, knowledge of liturgy and the Order's

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1. See in particular circulars no.10 of 1962, no.2 of 1963 and no.4 of 1963, issued by the Advisory Board.

regulations<sup>1</sup>. These criteria differ from the unformulated and ad hoc qualifications of the early days. Furthermore, the men of God now have no part in the selection of candidates<sup>2</sup>. Even up to the 1950's, visioners and prophets often determined who would be ordained in accordance with the message of the Spirit. Today, however, candidates are chosen by the elders so that the more egalitarian method of previous years whereby visioners, as the spokesman of the congregation, chose their representatives has been eliminated.

As I mentioned in the Introduction (see pp.23-28), the process of role differentiation took place as the two kinds of role norms became distinct, so that the pivotal attributes of the roles of man of God and elder are organised around charismatic and customary norms. It is possible that the role of elder includes the lesser attributes of the ability to pray and heal because these norms are a carry over from the early days, when charismatic authority originated within the context of the Praying Band of Serafim. In those days, as we have seen, influence either depended upon the gifts of the Spirit, or the covert manipulation of the men of God by those not so blessed. Gradually criteria of customary authority were accepted, owing to the failure of the founder's charisma. Since this type of authority was introduced from outside the Order to legitimise the unfolding sub-roles of elders, it was confined to elders: prophets command others, as they always did, on the basis of their

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1. See circular no.10A of 1965, issued by the Advisory Board.
  2. This ruling was stated bluntly by the Advisory Board in circular no.2 of 1965.

charismatic powers.

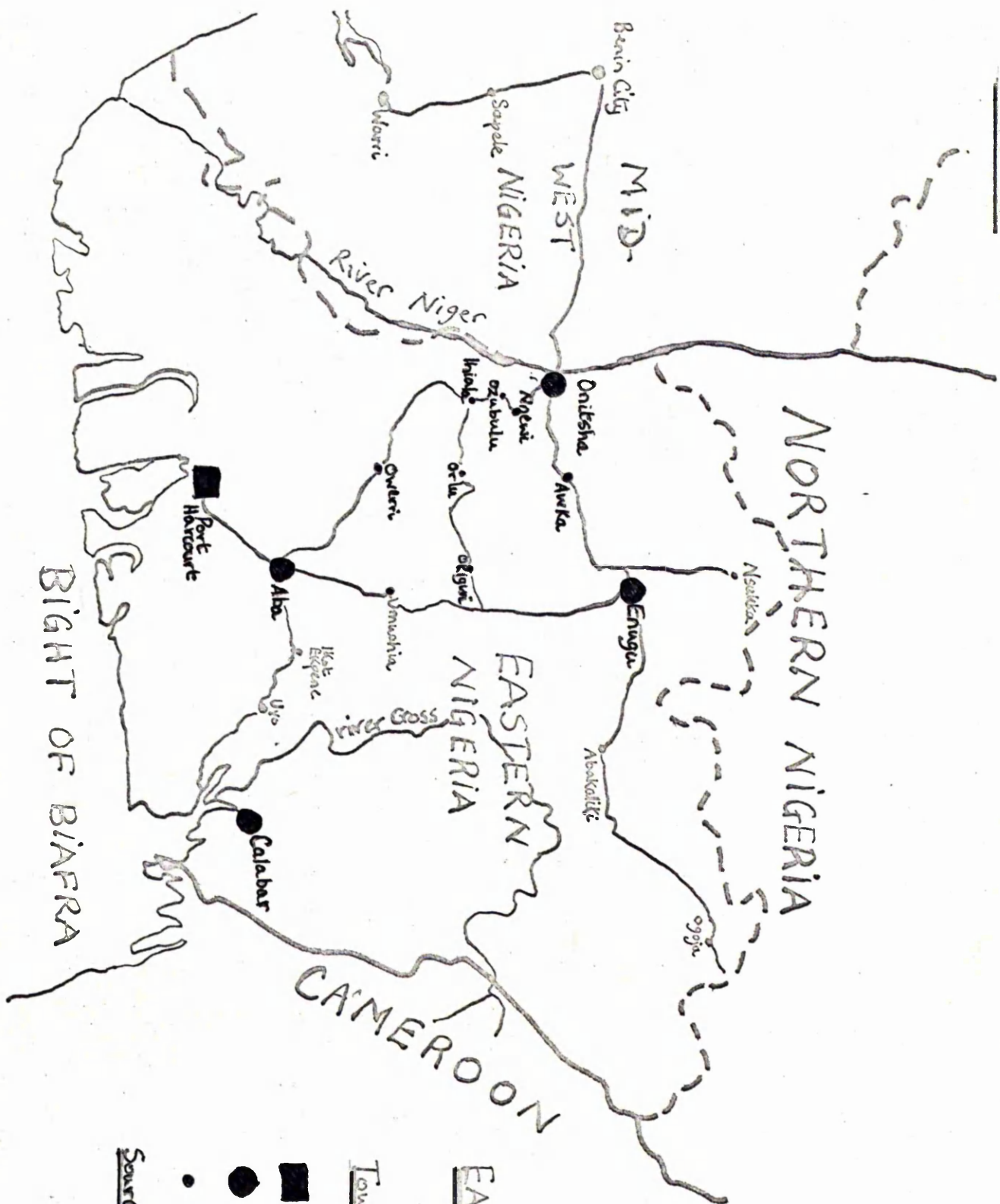
The cleavage in the role structure between the elders and the visioners is summed up in the role of the Senior Apostle General. As an elder, he is likely to get involved in struggles for the succession. So the sacred nature of the founder's charisma, which the Senior Apostle General now confers on an incoming Baba Aladura, is kept intact by the device of removing him from politics. This ritual innovation probably symbolises the political importance of ordination by a neutral elder. For the new Baba Aladura is invested with his new religious status by an elder who is ritually segregated from the factions and disputes of elderhood. It is by such means that the ordination of a Baba Aladura has had the effect of making his right to hold the role incontestable.

In spite of the division between the norms of charismatic and customary authority, which has been institutionalised in the roles of elder and man of God, roles are linked in three ways. The critical factor is the role of man of God, which can be held together with the other roles of floor member or junior elder. For example, a floor member who also sees visions combines both roles; and so does an elder with spiritual gifts. The men of God are therefore structurally related to junior elders and floor members. And in time, the secular duties of junior elders who are visioners over-ride their charismatic gifts, so that their role as a man of God fades out. Nevertheless, the opposition between the behaviour expected of men of God and elders means that Serafim who hold both roles experience certain strains.

Secondly, all ordinands receive the charisma of the founder which legitimises their right to hold a sub-role. Men of God, however, control others - if they are still floor members - through their own ability to produce a regular flow of self-fulfilling visions, which results in Serafim recognising them as visioners. But when they are ordained as junior elders, having proved their spiritual gifts on the floor of the prayer-house, the men of God also receive the charisma of the founder when they are blessed by the praying father in front of the general public of Serafim. Thus, the visioners are soon integrated into the ranks of the secular elders by the ritual of ordination.

Finally, all behaviour in the Order is eventually justified by reference to the ultimate values of Serafim: the charisma of the founder, whose apocryphal behaviour is emulated by members, and the word of God as revealed through the Bible. It is these values which are based on religious precedent that ultimately sanction the impersonal procedures for selecting a Baba Aladura, and the criteria by which roles are ranked. The duties of sub-role holders for instance, are justified by quotations from the scriptures and the moral qualities attributed to Tunolashe. In the last analysis, the pattern of relationships in the Order can be seen as reflecting the stamp of charismatic norms originating from within; and the influence of doctrines and customary principles of organisation, which stem from without the Order.

MAP.2

EASTERN NIGERIATowns

- Urban centres: 50,000+
- Neo-urban towns: 50,000+
- Agwa-towns : 5,000-50,000

Source: Nelson's Nigeria Junior Atlas (1965, p.7).

## CHAPTER 2<sup>1</sup>

### The Process of Role Differentiation in the Eternal Sacred Order at Fegge, Onitsha: 1949-1966

In the previous Chapter, I analysed the emerging role structure of the Eternal Sacred Order, Mt. Zion, as a variable which was dependent upon the resolution of the succession problem for the break through to internal stability. This, as we saw, has been achieved by integrating bureaucratic criteria of authority with those stemming from customary and charismatic conceptions of legitimacy. My intention in this chapter is to examine the way in which the Order's roles were taken up in the prayer-house at Fegge, Onitsha, and to see how factors related to the customary political institutions of Ibo village-groups, as well as the interaction between Serafim in the prayer-house affected this prayer-house. For it is obviously important to try and assess the extent to which conditions in the Fegge prayer-house modified the role structure handed on by the headquarters at Lagos. An organisation run on impersonal lines could be expected to retain a uniform system of administration wherever it was set up.

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1. This chapter is based upon information which is drawn from two sources. First, I conducted interviews with prophetess Esther who founded the prayer-house, and with the founding elders and members at Onitsha, as well as the senior elders at Enugu - the regional headquarters. Secondly, I conducted a sample survey of 113 members at the Fegge and Inland Town prayer-houses in 1965. Another survey of a control group of non-members was drawn from the same residential areas to provide a check on the membership survey. These surveys are explained in Appendix A.

The following account of the historical development of relationships in the prayer-house at Onitsha is also intended to provide the framework within which we can place the later analysis of belief and behaviour among Onitsha Serafim. Like the next chapter, which examines ritual and belief in the prayer-house, this analysis is essentially structural and preparatory to Chapters 4 and 5 which look at processes of role behaviour among members.

The chapter begins with a brief description of how the Cherubim and Serafim first came to eastern Nigeria; and then I turn to the prayer-house at Fegge, which is an electoral ward in the Waterside Town of Onitsha. I have divided the analysis of how relationships developed in the prayer-house into three parts, in order to facilitate this assessment of how the role structure was influenced by relationships between Serafim, as well as by customary institutions of government in the wider field of Iboland. I begin with an account of how the process of taking up the Order's roles was affected by the transition from a small intimate congregation to a larger one drawn from many parts of Iboland. Then I examine the part played by social factors in the arrangement of role relationships. Here, I consider the contribution of Ibo conceptions of government which have modified the band system that is so important to the administration of Yoruba prayer-houses in Lagos. This is followed by an examination of the way in which changes in the age of members reinforced the authority of elders, while the growing diversity in the occupations of Serafim enabled the elders to streamline the internal administration of the prayer-house at Fegge.



### Early Days in Eastern Nigeria

The Garrick Braide movement of 1915, which began in the Rivers province of eastern Nigeria, was the earliest forerunner of the aladura churches in the east. By the 1930's, the Delta and southern Owerri province were, for reasons which I explain in Chapter 6, noted for the many varieties of aladura and Pentecostal churches at work there. But the two main Yoruba aladuras, the Christ Apostolic Church and the Cherubim and Serafim, did not really take root until after the second world war. Today the Christ Apostolic Church has about 12,000 to 13,000 members in the east (interview, Pastor Okoh, August 19 1965), and the Eternal Sacred Order counts 10,000 members (interview, Chancellor Otubu, June 19 1965)<sup>1</sup>.

The first section of Serafim to arrive seems to have been H.A. Phillips's Praying Band of the Sacred Society of Cherubim and Serafim which one of Phillips's elders, Apostle Awodeyi, started in Enugu in 1931 (interview, Apostle Awodeyi, October 4 1965). Awodeyi, a Yoruba, was then a civil servant working in the railways on transfer to the east. Although Awodeyi had joined Tunolashe's Praying Band in 1927, he drifted in and out of Mt. Zion and Ita Balogun during the next twenty years. On his next tour to Port Harcourt in 1935, Awodeyi "met Ita Balogun there" and "set up a booth in Niger street" (ibid). However, like the early branch in Enugu, the members kept on scattering. So in 1948 he asked Mt. Zion to send help, but they refused. H.A. Phillips then asked his brother J.A. Phillips of the Sacred Cherubim and Serafim Society of

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1. This figure compares favourably with that for 1956 when there were only 500 members and 10 branches.

Nigeria (Agege) to leave Kaduna and go to Port Harcourt. The next year J.A. Phillips and his senior elder in the east, Shepherd S.O. Coker<sup>1</sup>, got in touch with Rabbi E.O. Coker of Mt. Zion, who had just been transferred to the east from Lagos. E.O. Coker is a Yoruba and was also employed in the Nigerian railways; and as from 1949 the two sections set up the eastern Conference of the Cherubim and Serafim Society.

The Cherubim and Serafim Society was a wholly Yoruba affair, being a coalition of sections under Captain Abiodun; Mt. Zion, Ita Balogun and J.A. Phillips, which was established in western Nigeria in 1947 (interview, Chancellor Otubu, June 20 1965). Although the 1949 Ibadan conference failed to achieve the Society's purpose of uniting the quarreling sections, Ita Balogun and E.O. Coker continued to cooperate in the east until 1952 when they split up. It was then that E.O. Coker proceeded to build up Eternal as the largest body of Serafim in the east.

However, before Coker had arrived in Enugu a lone prophetess from Mt. Zion had already set foot in the town of Onitsha sometime during 1947. It was this remarkable woman who was responsible for much of the early evangelisation by Eternal in the east and mid-west; and it was her charismatic powers which attracted the early members of the Fegge prayer-house.

#### A Prophetess Comes to Onitsha

Onitsha is a large trading settlement on the river Niger which

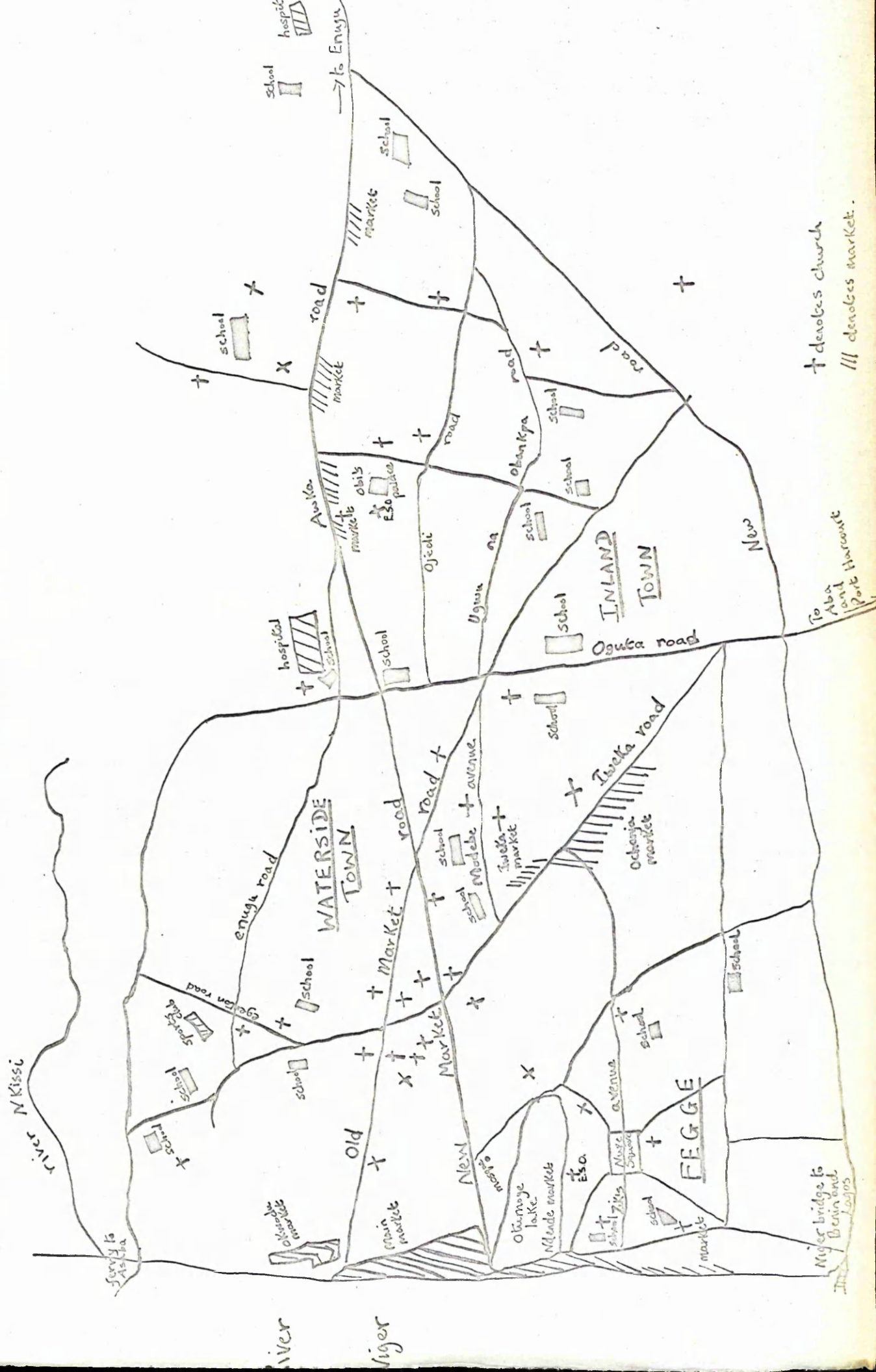
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1. Shepherd S.O. Coker was the father of the Order's present lawyer, D.O. Coker; and E.O. Coker is the son of Chief J.A. Coker of African church fame, who succoured Tunolashe in 1924. Jennie Winful, one of the six living subscribers of the Advisory Board, is a paternal aunt of E.O. Coker (interview, Chancellor Otubu, June 20 1965).

had the largest population of any eastern town in 1952 (Census of eastern Nigeria, 1953, vol.1, p.10). Since I discuss the social field of the prayer-house in Chapter 6, it is sufficient for the moment to note that unlike the three other main cities in the east, Onitsha's population are principally engaged in trade. Map 2 on page 65 gives the geographical location of Onitsha and other eastern towns; and Map 3 on page 71 illustrates the lay out of the town of Onitsha. The electoral ward of Fegge is situated in the new Waterside Town, which initially grew up in the days of the palm-oil trade when water travel on the Niger was the only way of transporting goods to the sea outlets of the Delta. Later, Onitsha became a vital link in trans-Nigerian communications, because it stands at the entrance to eastern Nigeria for travellers coming by road from Lagos.

The Waterside Town, however, is a settlement of immigrants living on land leased by the residents of Inland Town - the old village-group of Onitsha. Inland Town, where a new branch of the Order was founded by Fegge in 1963, lies about one and a half miles inland. But it was to Fegge that prophetess Esther came in 1947, and the social composition of the population in Fegge at that time is reflected in that of the early recruits - they were all immigrants and traders.

Prophetess Esther, who gathered the nucleus of the prayer-house at Fegge, is part Yoruba (Ilesha) and part Itsekiri from the western Delta. Like so many converts to the western Serafim, Esther's mother was a Christian and she had strong contacts with the African churches. Her

ONITSHA TOWN



mother belonged to the United Native African Church, and her junior brother is a pastor in that church (interview, prophetess Esther, June 3 1965). When Esther came to Lagos in the late 1920's with her husband to whom she was unhappily married, she heard of Tunolashe's Praying Band. And several of Esther's kinsmen from Ilaje province got to know of the Praying Band "and wanted to take it home" (ibid). After Esther joined the Band, because her husband was said by the visioners to be poisoning her, she was called by God to work for Him. God sent His angels to her on many occasions, and she often heard voices telling her to go and build "a treasure above" (i.e. to get reward in Heaven by preaching). After several signs that God had indeed called her, Esther went out preaching in Lagos and the western region. After re-marrying, God told her to leave her husband and children for seven years while she preached His word in the east.

On arriving in Onitsha in 1947 Esther stayed with the Apostolic Faith, a secession from the Apostolic Church in Ilesha that was founded in 1941. This church was established in Onitsha that same year (interview, prophetess Okoro, May 13 1965). But although Esther preached for several weeks, she failed to make any real impact so "God told (her) to go to Port Harcourt, because He has things to tell (her) there". There Esther met up with Shepherds S.O. Coker and Awodeyi at Niger street who sent her to preach in Aba, "because the Lord had put many sheep inside the (Aba) prayer-house" by then (interview, Esther, June 3 1965). After quarreling with a prophet there who ordered her to Umuahia against God's wishes,

Esther was told by the Lord several months later to start returning to Onitsha.

On November 18th, a Thursday, Esther got to Onitsha and stayed with a Yoruba goldsmith at Fegge. When she began preaching and ringing her bell, "many people rush in when they heard the news" (interview, Apostles Onyechi and Mma, September 2 1965). One of those who did hear the news was Peter Okpara from Nkpologu, a village-group about thirty miles from Onitsha. Peter told his kinsman, Onyechi, who had just returned from Warri where he was trading in yams. Since Onyechi was even then suffering from the back pains which still plague him, he was double interested to hear about the new prophetess.

That night he and Peter went to find Esther, but Peter had forgotten the way. So the next morning at 5 a.m. they got up on hearing a bell ringing<sup>1</sup>: thereupon they entered Eternal and "began going as often as (they) could" (ibid). Onyechi's pains were cured - for the moment - and soon after this, probably in early 1950, their following was enlarged by a miracle. Samuel Udo, an early member from Nkpologu, had been told that his child was dead so he rushed to see Esther. Esther fetched the corpse and prayed all night over it; and then, "the child woke up and now he lives and is a member" (ibid).

With people at Fegge hurrying to see this new prophetess whose prayers could do what doctors could not, Esther went to Enugu to see E.O. Coker. It is probable that the Serafim at Port Harcourt put her

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1. The sound of a bell being rung by hand is an invariable accompaniment to all services, open-air preaching, and the like.

in touch with Coker who was, like Esther, a member of the Eternal Sacred Order and a Yoruba. Coker promised to help Esther and so she returned to Fegge to continue the good work. Esther's trip to Enugu explains why the branch there - the regional headquarters - claims to have founded the Onitsha prayer-house in 1950<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, the fluid state of affairs at the Enugu branch at this time is indicated by the fact that the prophetess was not put onto a regular salary by the Enugu prayer-house until December 1952. She was then paid £1. 15s. per month (Enugu prayer-house files, Minutes of the General Committee, 29 April 1953).

Early days in the prayer-house at Fegge, Onitsha: 1949-1954

As the months rolled by in 1950, the three sons of Nkpologu who had first sought out prophetess Esther - Stephen Ezigwe, Peter Okpara and Onyechi - told their townsmen at home and in the Onitsha market about the new prophetess who was doing many wonderful things at Fegge. By the end of 1950 (twenty-three sons of Nkpologu and two adjoining village-groups had enlisted with Eternal at Fegge: all were traders, with the exception of two Church Missionary Society teachers who later left (interview, Apostle Onyechi, September 2 1965)).

Thus it was that the first few followers of Esther used ties deriving from their community of origin to bring in more recruits. About one-third came from the two village-groups near Nkpologu, while two-thirds were sons of Nkpologu. Stephen Ezigwe, Peter Okpara and Onyechi brought

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1. Each of the main branches in the principal towns of the east claims to have been founded first, thereby deriving prestige from its status as a senior foundation branch.

in their trading mates from Nkpologu; and another recruit, who heard about the prayer-house when he was trading in the market, brought in about five men from his own village-group of Uga, which is adjacent to Nkpologu.

Of the Nkpologu Serafim about half came from just one village; they were therefore kinsmen because a village, which is made up of several patrilineages, is also an exogamous unit (V. Uchendu, 1965, p.54). Several villages, all of which are linked by a common shrine and market-place, compose a village-group<sup>1</sup>. In theory, the village-group is a kinship unit because all lineages impute descent from an eponymous ancestor. But in point of fact not all residents may be related by affinal, matrilineal, or patrilineal ties, because men take wives from other village-groups, as well as from villages in their own community. So, Serafim from the various villages of Nkpologu were linked by the bond of being a "son of the soil", or a "brother".

The word "brother", which is so often used between Serafim, connotes the friendly, trusting and helpful conduct that is the ideal Ibo

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1. There are variations of detail in the social and political organisation of Ibo village-groups, particularly those of Onitsha and Oguta which have chiefs and palace officials on Bini lines, and Nri-Awka which has priest-kings. But overall, the institutions of government and village organisation through a series of lineages, elders' councils, age-grades, secret societies or title associations, are common to all Ibo village-groups. Again, all communities in Iboland have a common earth shrine or oracle, which links the villages making up the group, a common market-place, and a public arena where representatives from lineages in the component villages meet from time to time to discuss their affairs. (See V. Uchendu, 1965, p.39; M. Green, 1947, pp.11-13; D. Forde and G. Jones, 1950, p.9.)



relationship between men of the same age and status. The term "brother" is applied by Serafim in three ways. First of all it refers to their kin from the village back home; secondly, it includes all sons of the village-group; and thirdly, it is used by Serafim in the context of the religious community of the prayer-house. All male Serafs are "brothers in Christ", just as all women Serafs are "sisters in Christ". The expression indicates that all are equal in the eyes of God, because all men and women are His children; and that the prayer-house is a community like the extended family, which imposes the reciprocal obligations, trust and consideration expected of kin. Thus, Serafim do their best to place unemployed brothers in Christ in jobs, they help them find a place to live when they first come to Onitsha, and lend money when someone is in need<sup>1</sup>.

Like the early members of Tunolashe's Praying Band of Serafim in Lagos, the first Serafim at the Fegge prayer-house were typically young, bachelors, Christian and literate. But as Onitsha is a trading town and not an urban centre based on manufacturing industries, nearly all the foundation members at Fegge differed from Tunolashe's Serafim by being traders. It seems, though, that Onyechi and the others were attracted by the simplicity of Esther's message - have faith in God and the power of prayer to protect one from adversity - and her spiritual power, which proved that God really was in their midst. Moreover, this was the first time that

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1. This is, of course, a common feature of both tribal and non-tribal associations in West African towns. See, for instance, Kenneth Little (1965, pp.24-35, 66-74) where he sums up the results of studies by Banton, Busia, Acquah, Fiawoo and others over the past decade into West African voluntary associations.

any of them had seen a white-robed prophetess in action. The exotic dress, like that of the angels above, the bell ringing and the miracles; all had a great impact upon the young traders who followed her.

In later years foundation members looked back upon the period between 1949 to 1955 as a mini-golden age when the Holy Spirit was really with them. Quickly, most of the Serafim at Fegge in 1950 "caught" the Spirit of Esther and began to vision, heal and pray powerfully. A foundation member who was at death's door was healed, and his wife bore a live child after years of miscarrying; a child that no hospital could cure was relieved of his sickness by Esther and her visioners; and a woman conceived after thirteen years of barren marriage.

In these times "great" visioners were the order of the day. Esther's charismatic powers were both contagious and exemplary. In the heady atmosphere of collective religious fervour, eager followers modelled their own visioning techniques on that of their mentor, while becoming possessed of the same Spirit that dwelt in Esther. "Prophets" Kaulinius and Michael Okpara from Nkpologu were among the great visioners of the prayer-house. Kaulinius "heard voices all the time, and told the members in 1953 that the market would burn. We preached it but people threw sand at us (and) after two days fire destroyed all (the) goods" in the market (interview, Apostle Onyechi, September 2 1965). Then in 1954, Michael Okpara on going to Abakaliki to trade in rice during the great famine of 1953 to 1956, saw angels for three weeks day and night without cease. He returned to Onitsha to tell his brothers at Fegge that the angels were singing "Holy, Holy, Holy"; the Serafim praised God and worshipping,

"developed great spiritual power". This peak of religious fervour culminated in the disaster of 1955, when the canoe in which Michael Okpara entered to cross over to Asaba sank in the Niger. Michael had been warned by Onyechi not to go; and there had been an earlier vision that a canoe would sink in the Niger. After four days the bodies drifted to the Onitsha waterside and were rescued by the Serafim, because the police would not touch them. Despite the taboo on having contact with corpses in such a condition<sup>1</sup>, members carried the sixteen bodies to the hospital for registration and then to the common cemetery ground.

This sad event marked a turning point in the religious and social development of the prayer-house. Not only did the members as a collectivity never again achieve the same sharp awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit, which had been with them in particular intensity since 1953. But the very act of breaking the taboo on "bad" corpses indicated that the values of Serafim had prevailed over certain of those deriving from the culture of their villages back home. From this time on, the secular problems of internal organisation, and the taking up of sub-roles worked with the growth in members to dilute the gifts of the Spirit which flourish in intimate little groups<sup>2</sup>.

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1. Death by violence, homicide or suicide is an offence against the ancestors and the earth goddess. Such corpses are thrown into the "bad bush"; and various ritual purifications are designed to dissociate the living from the dead (V. Uchendu, 1965, p.13). Even today in the Order, if a member dies in the prayer-house, it has to be reconsecrated by various ritual acts.
  2. The powers of charisma appear to be most evident in young prayer-houses that have a youthful membership. The branch at Inland Town, Onitsha, which was founded by Fegge in 1963, has a congregation of seventy-five and several young "great" visioners who attract new recruits.

The process of internal differentiation: 1949-1966

When the twenty-three young men from the vicinity of Nkpologu followed prophetess Esther, they knew nothing of ordination. And it was not until December 1952 that the first ordinations into the sub-roles of junior elders took place: they were baptised at the same time by the man who ordained them - "Senior" Apostle E.O. Coker<sup>1</sup> at Enugu (ibid).

It was pointed out in the previous chapter that since the 1940's when Baba Aladura Onanuga established the ritual of anointing ordinands with holy oil in accordance with Old Testament practice, elders have been divided into two grades of anointed and junior elders - or "workers" as the Serafim call them. We saw in the Introduction that sub-roles are specific clusters of attributes that are ranked in terms of the authority conferred; these attributes are carved out of the general role of elder (see pp.30-31). In 1949 when the prayer-house at Fegge had just been founded, there were six sub-roles in the grade of anointed elder which could be held outside Mt. Zion, Lagos<sup>2</sup>. These men, who are anointed

1. According to Chancellor Otubu, Coker was a Rabbi when he was transferred to the east in 1949 (interview, June 19 1965). However, by 1950 Coker was addressed as Apostle, and in 1952 he was calling himself "Senior Apostle in charge of the eastern Conference" (Correspondence in the Enugu prayer-house files of 1951 to 1952). Coker had not only jumped the intervening sub-roles of Pastor and Evangelist to become Apostle, but he had also promoted himself to Senior Apostle. This development indicates that informal methods of advancement in those days were often formalised later on by ordination, as was true of Coker.
2. Since the 1960's two junior and seven senior sub-roles have been open to elders in prayer-houses that head a district or province - from Aladura to Senior Apostle. At Mt. Zion, Lagos, which is the national headquarters, there are thirteen sub-roles altogether. Those of Baba Aladura, Deputy Baba Aladura, Senior Apostle General and Chancellor - in that order of ranking - come above the other nine (see Table 1.2 on page 55). After 1962 one more senior sub-role was created. The Super-vising Apostles were to reduce the work load on the Senior Apostles, which increased with the growing membership and the increasing amount of paper work. The complex administrative system, which was set up after 1962, entails much correspondence between the provinces and the national headquarters.

with holy oil,<sup>1</sup> are the senior elders of the prayer-house. The mark of the cross, which is dabbed on the forehead of the candidate with holy oil by the Baba Aladura, symbolises the religious status of senior elders who are responsible for the spiritual care of their flock. The junior grade of workers are just blessed and prayed over by the Baba Aladura: as less experienced men they carry out the decisions of the annointed elders. There are only two sub-roles for junior elders.

Table 2.1 on the following page gives the hierarchy of sub-roles, and the duties of the different categories of elders as they were laid down in the early 1960's. Although eight of the nine sub-roles now available to elders were present when the Fegge prayer-house was founded in 1949, the exact functions of each class were only loosely defined. There were also no regular procedures for promotion, because elders could and did skip the middle sub-roles of Rabbi and Pastor; for these were the days when the early members were promoted rapidly to lead the young prayer-house<sup>2</sup>.

1. Women are not annointed with holy oil. Like junior elders they are blessed when they are ordained into one of the four sub-roles available outside Lagos. Three more are limited to the Mt. Zion house of prayers - those of Mother Cherub, Mother Seraf, and Captain. Elsewhere, the Mother-in-Israel is the most senior of the female elders, who can not sit in the holy chancel because they are not annointed. The exclusion of women from the category of annointed elders is probably due to the possibilities of pollution in the chancel should a menstruating lady elder enter by mistake.
2. Both Apostles Mma and Onyechi of Onitsha omitted the sub-role of Rabbi. At the Enugu prayer-house ordination was even more rapid. Senior Apostle Mewu for example, who joined in 1950 was "appointed" a Leader in 1950 by Coker and ordained a Pastor in 1952, missing out the intervening roles of Rabbi and Leader.

Table 2.1    Sub-Roles in the Fegge Prayer-House<sup>1</sup>

<u>Role</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Function</u>
Senior Apostle	Annointed Elder	In charge of administration, arrange and carry out ordinations of junior elders
Supervising Apostle	Annointed Elder	As above
Apostle	Annointed Elder	As above
Prophet <sub>2</sub> Apostle <sub>2</sub>	Annointed Elder	To guide the congregation in vision, take care of the spiritual needs of the prayer-house
Evangelist	Annointed Elder	To preach the gospel to the unconverted
Pastor	Annointed Elder	In charge of services in the prayer-house, to look after the spiritual and material well-being of members
Rabbi	Annointed Elder	To conduct bible classes and teach the rules of the Order to members; and conduct all services except confirmation and ordination
Mother-in-Israel	Worker	To act as the Mother of the prayer-house, and caring for the sisters
Prophetess <sup>3</sup>	Worker	To guide the congregation in vision, and care for the spiritual needs of the sisters in particular
Leader and Lady Leader	Worker	To lead the congregation in prayer and assist the Rabbi in his duties
Aladura & Lady Aladura	Worker	To pray for all the needs of members, to fast often and learn the rules of correct prayer

1-3. See overleaf.

1. This Table is based on information in "The Order" (1960's, pp.5-12) which lays out the exact ranking and duties of each category of sub-roles.
2. This sub-role is only for the prophets who are paid employees of the prayer-house.
3. Prophetesses are also women gifted with the Spirit who are employed by the prayer-house. An experienced prophet or prophetess will earn about £11 a month in Onitsha, but a junior worker gets as little as £4 a month. Since the average wage of a skilled manual worker is between £4 to £5 a month, a senior prophet's salary compares favourably with those for skilled workers. Peel, however, has asserted that prophets are only paid in the Christ Apostolic Church, so that they depend upon wealthy patrons (J. Peel, 1966, p.454). This is not true of the Order in western and eastern Nigeria.

Table 2.2 shows how it was the foundation members who maintained their initial advantage over later arrivals. After the ordination ceremony of 1953, four of the six men who now rule the prayer-house had already been ordained as junior elders; and by 1957 Onyechi - one of the first Serafim at Fegge - had been ordained an Apostle. So that only five years after the first ordination of 1952, <sup>five</sup>~~seven~~ of the eight sub-roles available had been brought into operation.

Table 2.2<sup>1</sup> The Coming into Operation of Male Sub-Roles: 1949-1966

Sub-Role	1952	1956	1957	1966	Number of foundation elders ordained by the year; <u>1957</u> <u>1966</u> <sup>2</sup>	
Senior Apostle						
Supervising Apostle				1		1
Apostle			1	1	1	1
*Prophet-Apostle						
Evangelist		1	1	4	1	3
Pastor		1	1	2	1	1
Rabbi				6		3
Leader	2	3	4	7	3	3
Aladura	2	3	4	6	3	
<u>TOTAL</u>	4	8	11	27	9	12
=====						

\* Only held by prophets.

1-2. See overleaf.



1. This Table is based on my sample survey of 79 members at Fegge, of whom 27 were male elders and 10 lady elders. I also interviewed 11 prayer-receivers at Fegge to act as a check on committed Serafim. Altogether 133 members and prayer-receivers at Fegge and the Inland Town branch were interviewed. See Appendix A for an account of the survey.

The full complement of elders at Fegge in 1965 to 1966 was 40 men and women; 37 were included in my survey. The total membership of the prayer-house, according to peak attendance figures recorded by myself, is about 168 men and women. Sixty per cent of the members are men.

2. Of the original twenty-three foundation members, four have left, one is dead, a few are still floor members, but most have gone to other towns to work. Today there are twelve foundation members at Fegge.

The main point concerning this Table is that by 1957 nine out of eleven elders had been foundation members. The increase in the membership after the mid-1950's meant that eighteen men were ordained by 1965 who had joined after 1953. But five out of the six senior elders who rule the prayer-house today are foundation members from Nkpologu and Uga village-groups. Esther's early followers have retained their positions of seniority, but the process of expansion in the size of the congregation has had two related effects. Table 2.3 shows the fast growth in the membership between 1957 and 1961, which increased the numbers of potential candidates for ordination and reduced mobility. The decline in mobility led to pressures on the middle sub-roles of Rabbi and Pastor from the growing numbers of junior elders seeking ordination.

Table 2.3<sup>1</sup>     Tithe-Payers in the Fegge Prayer-House: 1952-1965

<u>Year</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Total</u>
1952	19		19
1956	51	9	60
1957	49	19	68
1959	67	33	100
1960	99	50	149
1961	102	59	161
1962	112	44	156
1963	107	?	107
1964	143	?	143
1965	96	35	131

1. See overleaf.

1. Tithe-payers are the hard core of the prayer-house, who give one-tenth of their monthly income to the church at a special Sunday morning service. The above list is based on tithe records kept at the Fegge prayer-house.

This Table suggests that either the total congregation has declined since 1961, or that Serafim paying tithes have decreased. Part of the fall in tithe-payers between 1963 and 1964 was due to the establishment of the Inland Town prayer-house when some members left Fegge to organise the new branch. But since attendance figures did not drop during 1965 to 1966, remaining steady throughout, the size of the congregation appeared to be fairly static during this period.

The number of prayer-receivers in relation to the probable growth of the congregation gives a very approximate idea of the recruitment rate. During one week in May, when there were no special services, thirty prayer-receivers attended services that week. Since many come back for more prayers, we can assume that only about one-third are newcomers each week. Although the total number of tithe-payers has declined since 1961, more men went on paying tithes each year from 1961 to 1964: there was an average of about eleven new male tithe-payers over this period. Assuming then that approximately ten new members - men - are recruited annually, only one in ~~thirty-six~~<sup>thirty-five</sup> prayer-receivers becomes a committed Serafim (ratio calculated on basis of ten new tithe-payers into ~~365~~<sup>320</sup> prayer-receivers a year).

Although this estimated rate of recruitment is not high, it is presumably sufficient to compensate for members who fall away. It appears, therefore, that the prayer-house is experiencing a slower rate of growth than that of 1957-1961.

Although events in the Order at Lagos during the early 1960's resulted in the further definition and ranking of elders' sub-roles, the emergence of a routine system of promotion from one role to another in the Fegge prayer-house was also much influenced by purely internal factors. The rapid expansion of the late 1950's meant that more Serafim sought and were available for ordination, but in the meantime no more roles were created. The number of junior elders doubled between 1956 and 1966; in 1956 there was only one Rabbi, but ten years later there were eight Rabbis and Pastors. Now that there were several of these elders, it was only to be expected that they would be concerned to preserve their spheres of control vis a vis their seniors - the Evangelists and Apostles - and the junior elders.

One pointer to a correlation between role differentiation and an expanding membership was the move towards allocating duties more formally. Thus, Onyechi, who was ordained an Aladura in 1952, was also "appointed a leader" by prophetess Esther (interview, September 3 1965). For the next few years until the late 1950's, Onyechi as the "shepherd of the flock" (ibid) was present at all meetings, organising open-air preaching, praying for all in need, and caring for the pastoral welfare of the congregation. These tasks were over and above his duty as the senior elder of the prayer-house to act on the decisions taken by the informal meetings of elders and visioners. But by the next decade, after several years of Apostleship, Onyechi's duties were limited to overall responsibility for the decisions taken by the appointed elders. The Pastors

now looked after the welfare of members, the Evangelists organised open-air preaching, and the Aladuras and Leaders were to conduct prayers for supplicants.

As I mentioned previously (see page 85), the process of associating specific tasks with particular categories of sub-roles was also related to the decline in mobility by the early 1960's, which was due to the growing numbers of elders. Whereas Supervising Apostle Onyechi took seven years to become an Apostle from the time he joined, it has taken the present Evangelists an average of thirteen years to reach this role.

Table 2.4<sup>1</sup> Mobility in the Prayer-House, Fegge: 1949-1966

<u>Sub-role</u>	<u>No.of holders</u>	<u>Average no.of years to get present role since joined</u>	<u>Average no.of years before achieved role of Leader/Pastor from that of Aladura:</u>	
			<u>Leader</u>	<u>Pastor</u>
Sup.Apostle	1*			
Apostle	1*	9	0	2
Evangelist	4(3)*	13	1.7	6.3
Pastor	2(1)*	11.5	5	7
Rabbi	6(3)*	11	3	
Leader	7(3)*	9	2.2	

\* indicates foundation members with their numbers in brackets.

1. Here I give the mobility rates of elders from Leader upwards. The six Aladuras, who bring the total of male elders interviewed to twenty-seven, are omitted.

Today at least eleven years elapse before a new member can hope to become an Evangelist. He will have to wait much longer to hold the title of Apostle or Senior Apostle, because the Advisory Board ruled in 1964 that the present number of thirteen Apostles in the eastern Conference was to be fixed at that (circular no.2 of 23.3.1964). Again, whereas the two Apostles jumped the roles of Aladura and Rabbi, every elder now spends about two to three years holding one sub-role. Table 2.4 shows that Evangelists spent about one and a half years as Leaders, but the present Leaders had already had over two years experience in this sub-role when the survey was carried out.

The decline in mobility<sup>1</sup> in the last few years has obvious implications for the relations between senior and junior elders, and for the relationship between floor members and elders. Although fifteen out of fifty male Serafim interviewed alleged that they had refused ordination because they "were not ready" or interested, many others in the prayer-house and Order eagerly seek promotion (circular no.10a of 17.5.1965 issued by the Advisory Board). Since 1965 the policy of the Advisory Board has been to impose slower rates of mobility (ibid), in order to avoid a top heavy structure in which elders can form factions to support their particular cause against the policy of the Board. That the reduced

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1. A point frequently made by students of religious and secular associations in West African towns is that often there are as many offices as there are members (see, for instance, M. Fraenkel, 1964, p.151). However, in the Fegge prayer-house about one in four members hold an elder's sub-role (there are forty elders, and 128 floor members, making a congregation of 168); in other words, twenty-three per cent of the members are elders.

rate of mobility in the Fegge prayer-house, which was due to internal factors until 1965, has given rise to resentment among junior elders can be adduced from the frequent statement that, "the Spirit no be with us strong" anymore. In the old days of quick promotion, the visioners used to select candidates from the floor by vision. But since many now wish for ordination, the elders have managed to eliminate potential trouble-makers by excluding the men of God from ordination matters: this development was probably speeded up by the post-1962 policy of the Advisory Board to secularise ordination (see p.61). Thus, junior elders are dependent upon the good will of their seniors when seeking promotion: There is no quick way out as before, by getting a visioner to issue a favourable message from the Holy Spirit. Some Serafim lament the passing of "spiritual" criteria of ordination in favour of the assessment of the elders on the basis of meritorious behaviour and the like. To them, it is just another sign that the increased power of the elders over affairs is driving out the spiritual power so evident in the early years. That is, the body of the congregation have less formal influence over policy-making than previously.

For the first two years after the prayer-house was established, all members shared in the decisions taken at their informal meetings (interview, Apostles Onyechi and Mma, September 5 1965). Equally, many Serafim shared the powers of visioning which were so strong in those days (interview, Apostle Onyechi, September 3 1965). But as sub-roles were taken up, the distinction began to emerge between those with and those

without authority. Floor members were excluded from policy-making meetings after 1952 (ibid). And in 1958 to 1959 the different functions of elders, men of God, and floor members were marked out by the creation of two committees for senior and junior elders; a meeting was also organised for all visioners and prophets. At the same time, three years after the youths had been organised into the Army of Salvation band, all the brothers on the floor were told to form their own meeting (ibid). The reason given by the Apostles for this significant development was that there was "much confusion" at the informal meetings with "everyone fighting to be head".

This statement, given after the event, is indicative of the uncertain distribution of authority between sub-role holders which prevailed at the time. But as the numbers of elders and visioners increased, so did the competition between them. Furthermore, there were many who were not from the same village-groups as the founding elders (see Table 2.5, p.101). In the early years, the principal visioners came from Nkpologu and Uga village-groups so that the founding elders could restrain them from excesses by manipulating the bonds of local origin which they shared. However, as the congregation grew, Serafim from other areas began to outnumber those from Nkpologu. It is possible that as the elders were unable to impose their will by making use of local bonds, they began to distinguish between their own functions, and those of the men of God<sup>1</sup>. In this way, the bureaucratic principle of specialised tasks, which are formally allocated to role holders, was established: in defining the separate

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1. See overleaf.



1. I say probably, because it is uncertain what influence the regional headquarters at Enugu had on this development, or whether the more sophisticated elders at the Owerri, Aba and Port Harcourt prayer-houses had anything to do with the matter. Although the Fegge prayer-house is the main topic of this thesis, it should not be forgotten that the senior elders of the eastern Conference are in almost daily contact with one another. Today, the principle of government by elders through the appointed and workers committees is common to all eastern prayer-houses. But some prayer-houses with Yoruba elders have established more bands which are, however, excluded from policy-making.

Nevertheless, even if there was some kind of informal consensus among the senior elders in the east about the need for a more formal system of administration, the two-tier committee system did not emerge in all prayer-houses at the same time. At Fegge, internal conditions impelled the elders to adopt more routine administrative procedures; and the form they took may have been influenced by the opinions of other elders in the east.

responsibilities of the men of God and the elders, the prayer-house had recognised the incompatibility of charismatic and secular authority. Thus, the events of 1958 to 1959 ushered in the role relationships of the 1960's; these relationships are based on spheres of authority which are formally defined according to whether members hold the secular role of elder, or the charismatic role of man of God. Just as significantly, the elders were now unable to control individual Serafim by invoking loyalties based on the village or the town. Some members, however, who hailed from the Nkpologu area were susceptible to such informal pressures.

Another important development which was associated with the growth in numbers, was that as the elders emphasised the subordinate role of the floor members in relation to their own authority, the part played by the visioners in acting as the self-appointed spokesmen of the people probably became more significant. For as we shall see in Chapter 4, the men of God not only voice the opinions of the congregation when declaring the message of the Spirit, but also judge the behaviour of elders and floor members. Thus, with the formal isolation of the qualities expected of floor members, the visioners became more prominent as their spokesmen; a development which emphasised the subordinate role of floor members in the prayer-house.

#### Government And The Prayer-House: 1949-1966

So far my argument has been that the development of role relationships in the prayer-house was influenced by the growth in the numbers of members in the later years of the last decade. But in addition to the

physical factor of growth, we also have to consider the part played by sociological processes in shaping and modifying the role structure and methods of administration, which were transferred to Fegge from the Lagos headquarters. There, as was pointed out in Chapter 1, role norms were initially modelled on customary conceptions of the behaviour appropriate between elders and youth. Such hierarchical relationships are, of course, the antithesis of men endowed with the gifts of the Spirit who, unlike the elders, have direct access to the Spirit whose will they reveal.

In the previous chapter we traced the interaction between customary criteria of authority, originating in the wider social field of Yorubaland, and charismatic authority which derives its *raison d'être* from action between Serafim concerned to divine the future. Thus, in order to examine the way in which social factors influenced the development of relationships in the prayer-house at Fegge, Onitsha, we should distinguish between two levels of analysis. Beginning with the Order as a national organisation, there is the Yoruba influenced role structure in which the hierarchical ranking of elders contrasts with the egalitarianism of internally generated charisma. In this connection, it is important to assess the extent to which customary criteria of authority in Iboland modified this pre-determined framework, for the foundation members at Fegge brought with them the Ibo concept of elderhood. Secondly, there are factors originating in the prayer-house, that is, changes in the social composition of the congregation, which influenced the organisation of roles.

I begin with the system of government in the Lagos branches of the

Order, western Nigeria. The main feature is one of numerous sub-groups or praying bands which are manned by men, women or both sexes; and a division of functions between administrative committees. Altogether there are sixteen bands, six of which are for both men and women (The Order, 1960's, p.4). Each one caters for <sup>a</sup>different age-groups with the exception of the bands of Cherubim, Serafim, and the choiristers. The Yoruba emphasis on differentiation by age (D. Forde, 1951, p.13) is reflected in the rule that each band selects a patron or matron from among the elders. The elder in charge of the branch is Patron-General of all bands<sup>1</sup>. Thus, horizontal divisions by age are modified by the principle that senior Serafim act as patron or matron of the various bands, some of which are composed of younger men or women.

A prayer-house of the Order in Lagos<sup>2</sup> is administered by two committees. The general committee is composed of two representatives from each of the male bands who deal with financial affairs, organise plans to set up new branches, and settle disputes between members. Three officers are appointed by the elder in charge to represent him on the general committee; they report to the elder nominating them on the course of events. The executive committee of the prayer-house is composed of annointed elders, led by the elder in charge, who execute policy matters on the basis of decisions already taken by the bands represented on the

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1. The system of patrons and matrons will be familiar to students of West African voluntary associations. See, for instance, M. Banton, 1957, p.171; K. Little, 1959, pp.292-293.
  2. This account is based on interviews with Lagos elders, particularly with Evangelist Shonde of Yaba branch, where I attended services and meetings (March 29 and 30 1965).

general committee.

The outstanding feature of this system of government is the important part played by the praying bands in policy-making. The significant point is that male bands tend to be dominated by older men<sup>1</sup>, because while a Serafim can join another band on reaching the age of thirty or forty years, he remains a life member of the Army of Salvation which he joined when he was a youth. In this way, the Yoruba Serafim in Lagos have combined their own contribution to internal organisation - the praying band - with the customary role of older men in lineage affairs.

This, then, was the machinery of administration which the Fegge prayer-house inherited in 1949. The approach of the founding elders to government differed in several respects from that of their Yoruba counterparts. As is well known, Yoruba political organisation is centralised<sup>2</sup>: in most areas the chief, who heads the political hierarchy, governs with palace officials and cult groups like the Ogboni (P. Morton-Williams, 1954, p.100, and 1960, pp.371-373; P. Lloyd, 1954, pp.366-385). What really concerns us here is that the Yoruba people are stratified on non-kinship lines by occupational associations like guilds, politically orientated societies, religious cults and a variety of societies or "egbe".

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1. In one section of the Cherubim and Serafim, at Oke Seni, Ibadan, the average age of the praying band or "egbe aladura" was sixty years in 1965 (J. Peel, 1966, p.470).
  2. I am using the ethnographic present: in spite of some differences in the political and religious institutions of the Yorubas they are a people who all claim descent from Ife, speak one language and are grouped for the most part in large chiefdoms (D. Forde, 1951, p.2). Yorubas share the same system of kinship organisation, territorial settlement and sacred chiefs.

Ibo organisation, on the other hand, is relatively diffuse and unspecialised. The semi-autonomous villages which make up a village-group are run by elders' councils which are drawn from the lineages; secret or title societies, and age-groups also have some influence on the conduct of affairs. With one or two exceptions<sup>1</sup> there is no stratification by occupation; neither are there any political functionaries like the palace officials of the Yoruba.

Thus, the founding elders at the Fegge prayer-house were less inclined to think in terms of government by elders through a series of bands. Rather, they emphasised the principle of management by elders in council; the few bands that were allowed to develop were reduced to purely religious or social societies. Needless to say, it took some time for this system to evolve.

For the first few years, from 1949 to 1956, there were no formal meetings, except for the purpose of worship; neither were there any bands. When Esther had gathered her early followers "she taught (them) the way of Serafim", telling the members to start a choir and bible class (interview, Apostle Onyechi, September 5 1965). But nothing was done until the mid-1950's, when the women were organised into their own meeting, and the youths set up in their band of the Army of Salvation (ibid). By the late 1950's, with the growth in the membership, the choir had begun to

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1. The blacksmiths at Awka, for instance, were organised into a guild, as were the wood-carvers. Nri-Awka has a system of priest-kings; and Onitsha village-group is headed by a sacred chief who governs through palace officials, who hold one of three grades of title in the Ndichie society.

function and bible classes were being held. But even in 1965, out of a total of sixteen bands which could have been organised, only five were in operation - the bands of Army of Salvation, Army of Christ, Cherubim, Serafim and the choiristers. Women were first organised into the bands of Queen Esther and Sheba in 1966. These bands are completely disassociated from the elders. Although the Fegge prayer-house differs from branches in other urban centres in the east, which generally have about eleven bands, the eastern elders have not been particularly interested in developing the Yoruba band system. Instead, the emphasis has been on elaborating the duties of elders, and on ensuring that the floor and the men of God are excluded from policy-making (interview, Apostle Idimogu, May 8 1965).

As I explained previously, a two-tier system of elders' committees was set up in 1958 to 1959 (see page 91). Both the elders' committees are chaired by the Supervising Apostle, and have their own secretaries and minute books. The visioners' meeting is attended by the senior prophet of the prayer-house who is also an annointed elder; he keeps an eye on proceedings, and reports any disputes or troubles to the annointed elders. Further developments occurred in the 1960's, when more committees were organised to deal with the affairs of the growing congregation, and the new sub-branches established by Fegge in Onitsha district. At the same time the Advisory Board in Lagos reorganised the national administration of the Order. A hierarchy of committees now links the sub-branch to the mother prayer-house of a district like Fegge, and the district is

tied to the regional headquarters through the province. The regional headquarters then deals directly with the Advisory Board in Lagos through a committee of representatives from the eastern Conference. These administrative reforms also entailed a growing amount of paper-work at prayer-houses like Fegge which head a district.

However, the foundation elders at Fegge did not only modify the methods of governing a prayer-house which were handed on by the Order in Lagos. As we saw at the beginning of the chapter, all the foundation members were either linked by kinship ties or bonds of common local origin (see pp.74-75). It is likely that in the early days of informal administration most of the decisions were really taken and executed by these men, who were also the first senior elders. In spite of the creation of the annointed and workers committees in 1958, the initiative in policy-making still lies in the hands of a majority of the founding elders who made up nine out of the sixteen annointed elders in 1966. Out of six senior elders, who include the Apostles, five come from the village-groups of Nkpologu and Uga; and it is this caucus of foundation elders, who are also old trading comrades, who administer the prayer-house within the framework of the two elders' committees.

Although the caucus is closely involved in all matters concerning the prayer-house, this method of government by a self-appointed gerontocracy is modified by the principle of consensus. All elders have their say at the two committees, taking the Apostles to task if necessary. And the elders in the caucus have to act discreetly, accepting the



decisions of the committees, at least in theory; and they also have to execute the wish of the committee if the majority are strongly in favour, regardless of their own opinions.

To a large extent, the internal stability of the Fegge prayer-house over the years can be attributed to the informal but highly effective influence of the caucus of Nkpologu-Uga elders. This point can be demonstrated by the struggles for power that sometimes plague the branches at Port Harcourt, Aba and Enugu. The more sophisticated and educated membership of these prayer-houses reflects the greater development of factories in Port Harcourt which employ white-collar and skilled labour, and the many government offices in Enugu, the regional capital of the east. Onitsha, on the other hand, is mainly a commercial town populated by traders. Unlike clerks or foremen who work for the government or expatriate firms, traders are not transferred to another office or factory every two years. The senior and junior elders in the prayer-houses at Enugu, Port Harcourt and Aba are continually changing. But the elders at Fegge who form the caucus, as well as most of the annointed elders, have stayed in Onitsha to trade.

The fact that no group has seceeded from the Fegge prayer-house since it began seventeen years ago, indicates that the founding elders have successfully established a stable system of relationships. The senior personnel running the prayer-house have remained unchanged since the early 1950's, knit together by their long experience of life in the way of Serafim, their common work in the market, and above all their ties of kinship and local origin.

The Influence of Changes in the Social Composition of the prayer-house.

This brings us to the influence of internal social factors as occupation and education on the development of relationships in the prayer-house. Earlier, I said that changes in the social composition of the prayer-house must be considered - in addition to concepts of social and political organisation originating in the wider field of Iboland - as factors which have influenced the development of roles. The most important of these changes in the composition of the prayer-house are the recruitment of Serafim from outside the village-groups of Nkpologu and Uga, the gradual increase in the average age of the congregation, and the addition of white-collar workers.

After the first few years the prayer-house began to recruit members from outside the village-groups of Nkpologu and Uga. The growing diversification in the local origins of Serafim interviewed in the survey of members is shown in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5    Changes in the Local Origins of Serafim at Fegge:    1949-1966

<u>Year Joined</u>	<u>Nkpologu-Uga village-</u> <u>groups</u>		<u>Other village-groups</u> <u>Awka, Orlu, Okigwi</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Elders</u>	<u>Floor</u>	<u>Elders</u>	<u>Floor</u>	
1949-1953	12	2	3		17
1954-1966	4	9	16	33	62

Of the seventeen members in the sample who joined up between 1949 and 1953, only three came from outside Nkpologu or Uga. But in the past decade the proportion has been reversed, with just thirteen out of forty-

nine members coming from these two village-groups. However, elders and floor members born in Nkpologu and the two adjacent village-groups still form over one-third of the congregation. The change in the local origins of the prayer-house was marked by new ways of recruitment. Earlier on in the chapter I mentioned that the twenty-three foundation members were all converted to the Serafim way by their kin or townsmen (see p.74). With the exception of two primary school teachers, they were all traders so that occupational links ran parallel with their local ties. Nearly half of the Serafim in my sample were told about the prayer-house by kin or townsmen<sup>1</sup>, and one-fifth came to Fegge through friends at work or in the compound. A significant proportion (one-tenth), heard about the Serafim through gossip about someone's miraculous cure, and so forth. But conversion by evangelisation, despite the emphasis on preaching, only played a small part in recruitment - just three members out of the seventy-nine Serafim interviewed at Fegge came to the prayer-house in this way.

The growth of the congregation by the recruitment of new members from all over Iboland<sup>2</sup> through kinship and occupational links had another effect on the composition of the prayer-house, which influenced relationships. In the early years nearly all the members were traders, but in

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1. Much the same proportions were true of the thirty-four members interviewed at the Inland Town prayer-house.
  2. Unlike prayer-houses in Enugu, Aba or Port Harcourt, the two branches at Onitsha are mainly drawn from Ibos, because of the absence of many employment opportunities in offices, factories or business concerns, which attract other ethnic groups seeking clerical work. Even so there are two Ibibios, one Yoruba and one Togolese at Fegge. The Inland Town prayer-house has a wider ethnic distribution because it is manned by white-collar workers, some of whom left the Fegge prayer-house in 1963 to found the Inland Town branch.

the previous decade several white-collar members have joined. All but one of the ten come from outside Nkpologu-Uga, as do the five members with secondary education<sup>1</sup>.

Table 2.6    Changes in the Educational Standards of Male Serafim at Fegge: 1949-1966

<u>Education</u> <sup>2</sup>	<u>1949-1953</u>	<u>1954-1966</u>		<u>Total</u>	<u>Control Group</u> <sup>3</sup>
	<u>Elders</u>	<u>Elders</u>	<u>Floor</u>		
Standard 2-5	3	3	6	12	10
Standard 6	4	9	8	21	20
Class 1-5		3	2	5	11
Illiterate	5		7	12	7
<u>Total</u>	12	15	18	50	48

The improvement in the educational standards of members is particularly noticeable among elders. Whereas five of the foundation elders were illiterate, no elder who joined since 1954 was illiterate. An average of forty per cent of male Serafim educated to Standard Six compares favourably with that of thirty-seven per cent for the control

1. At the Inland Town prayer-house, nine of the seventeen men interviewed had secondary education; and all but two of the men were white-collar workers. All the Inland Town elders were white-collar workers.
2. Primary school takes a child through six grades in the east, from Standards One to Six. There are five classes in secondary school, which ends with the West African School Certificate. Following the Census of 1952 to 1953, I have classified those with one year of primary schooling as illiterate. In the towns, the term illiterate refers to people unable to read or write in English or Ibo. But they can usually speak some pidgeon English.
3. The control group was composed of 103 respondents, all non-members of the Order, interviewed in Inland Town and Fegge. See Appendix A for an account of this survey.

group; but twenty-four per cent of the control respondents had some kind of secondary education compared to only eight per cent of the Serafim at Fegge. However, the literacy percentages were much the same; eighty-six per cent of the control group and eighty-five per cent of the male Serafim at Fegge were literate.

Before I comment on the effect of this change on relationships in the prayer-house, we should look at the process of occupational diversification over the same period.

Table 2.7     Changes in the Occupations of Male Serafim at Fegge, Onitsha:  
1949-1966

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Elders</u> <u>1949-53</u>	<u>Elders</u> <u>1954-66</u>	<u>Floor</u> <u>1954-66</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Control</u> <u>Group</u>
White-collar		7	3	10	10
Skilled workers and self-employed technical <sup>1</sup>		1	1	2	7
Traders	12	3	6	21	17
Artisans		1	3	4	6
Skilled and unskilled labourers			7	7	6
Paid workers of the prayer-house		2		2	
Unemployed		1	3	4	
Retired					1
Other					1
<u>Total</u>	12	15	23	50	48

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1. Self-employed technical workers have some mechanical training, and work on their own as electricians, photographers, mechanics and the like.

In the early years all the foundation members were traders, but since then ten white-collar workers have been recruited as well as some artisans, labourers, and skilled technical workers. Today, about forty per cent of the men at Fegge are traders compared with approximately thirty per cent of the control group. But both samples had much the same proportion of white-collar workers. Since I discuss the occupational distribution of the population of Onitsha in Chapter 6, it is sufficient at the moment to note that the prayer-house is drawn in the main from the less skilled section of the population. On the whole, the members are fully occupied and are paying their way: the unemployed and the like who seek help by prayers mostly drift off, but some whose wish has been granted stay<sup>1</sup>. To this extent then, the prayer-house is based on those who have "arrived" and not the rootless section of the population.

The most important point to emerge from the two preceding Tables is the possible influence of white-collar Serafim on relationships in the prayer-house. In the early 1950's there were no clerks or teachers, for the two primary school teachers left a year after the prayer-house began. Since 1954 ten white-collar workers, mostly clerks and typists, have joined and of these seven are now elders. It is not only that

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1. See page 86, footnote 1, where I calculated the estimated proportion of prayer-receivers who become committed Serafim. Of the eleven prayer-receivers interviewed at Fegge, none were unemployed. Four were traders, five were white-collar and professional workers, and one was an unskilled labourer. However, of the ten prayer-receivers interviewed at Inland Town three were unemployed: there was much the same occupational distribution.

because the prayer-house seeks educated men who can organise and administer the many new sub-branches clerks, teachers or male nurses tend to be promoted more quickly than artisans or traders<sup>1</sup>, if they are eager for ordination. But the white-collar members at Fegge are the Serafim who advocate such new measures as paid secretaries, and attractive salaries to keep energetic prophets<sup>2</sup>. The elders were aided in their bid to establish the two elders committees in the late 1950's, and the sub-committees of the last few years to deal with the printing press, tithes collection, ordination matters and the like, because there was a nucleus of members who were able to transpose the procedures of their office to the prayer-house situation. Of the ten white-collar Serafim, two had three posts each on different committees; and four held two such sub-roles each during 1965 to 1966. These men were all elders, for whatever may have been the case before, elders reserve committee work for themselves. To this extent, then, formal leadership in the societies, bands and

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1. At Inland Town, which has the highest proportion of white-collar members, the vice-principal of a local school was ordained an Aladura although he only went to prayers once a week. The sole graduate member was ordained an Aladura and Leader two years after he had joined; and a teacher at Fegge was ordained a Rabbi one year after he had been ordained a Leader. The rapidity with which these professional men were promoted does not extend to the majority of Serafim in Onitsha who are clerks, traders, artisans or labourers.
  2. Prophets often grumble because of their allegedly low pay and poor working conditions. Nevertheless, the wages of experienced prophets compare favourably with those for skilled manual or lower paid clerical workers in Onitsha: they range from £4 to £10 a month. For many prophets, their "call" saves them from total unemployment: I discuss the social background of prophets in Chapter 4.

committees of the prayer-house is a function of elderhood and occupational standing.

Whereas the process of recruiting members from areas outside Nkpologu and Uga led to a congregation which was educationally and occupationally more diverse, the increasing difference in the ages of floor members and elders facilitated the growing distinction between these roles. When the prayer-house began the average age of the foundation members in my sample was twenty years: they were a youthful following, excited about the powers of the Spirit. Now, the average age of the elders is thirty-seven years, compared to thirty years for the floor members.

Table 2.8    Age Differentials Among Male Serafim at Fegge: 1949-1966

<u>Age Interval</u>	<u>Foundation</u>	<u>Elders</u>	<u>Floor</u>	<u>Average Age</u>	
	<u>Elders</u> <u>1949-1953</u>	<u>1966</u>		<u>Elders</u> <u>1966</u>	<u>Floor</u> <u>1966</u>
10 - 14	3				
15 - 19	3	4	12		
20 - 29	5	13	10		
30 - 39	1	8	1		
40 - 49		2			
50 - 59					
60 +					
<u>Total</u>	12	27	23	37.1	30.0



The elders today are older men who are entitled to respect on the grounds of their age seniority - if nothing else. Floor members, however, are in the category of "youths" who are expected to cultivate the qualities of obedience to their spiritual fathers in Christ. As was the case with the young Serafim at Fegge in the early years of the last decade, the gifts of the Spirit are associated with youthful fervour. Now, the youth are the floor members; but in the early years all the members were young, and filled with the Spirit until the heavy responsibilities of elderhood at the senior level reduced their gifts of praying and healing<sup>1</sup>. The visioners, who are not paid employees, rise from the floor, thus exemplifying the association of youth with charismatic powers<sup>2</sup>. But after two to three years of work as junior elders, new responsibilities temper the power of the Spirit. Gradually their role as a man of God fades out and they become full elders with the gifts of praying and healing, which form the lesser attributes of the elder's role. Thus, the process of ageing in the prayer-house contributed to the present system of relationships in which the role of elder is counterpoised against that of floor member; and in which the role of visioner is identified with the spiritual gifts of the young on the floor of the prayer-house, who can use this role as a stepping-stone to ordination.

1. This is a common statement by elders to explain the loss of charismatic powers which they had when they were floor members. It does, of course, express the incompatibility between charismatic and secular obligations which was pointed out earlier (see p.93).
2. I have no exact figures for the Fegge prayer-house, because only two of the recognised visioners were included in my sample. However, the eleven visioners are all younger men between the ages of twenty to thirty years. At Inland Town, the three most active visioners on the floor are all youths under the age of twenty.

### The Role Structure of the Prayer-House at Fegge

In the preceding analysis, I have argued that the development of relationships in the prayer-house should be seen as a process in which factors arising out of the prayer-house situation, as well as customary conceptions of government in Iboland, influenced the way members took<sup>up</sup> the role structure handed over by Lagos. We saw that the expansion in the size of the congregation affected the rate of mobility. So that as it took longer for Serafim to be promoted from one sub-role to another, the resulting pressures helped to define the precise duties and authority of each category of elders. With the elders concerned to preserve their position, the role of floor member emerged clearly. After the early 1950's, floor members were not allowed to share in decision-making with the elders. And by the year 1959, visioners were excluded from policy-making unless they were also junior elders. Thus, reduced mobility worked to sharpen the attributes of the roles of elder, visioner and floor member. The visioners became more important as the representatives of the floor, by acting as a channel of communication between the elders and the body of the prayer-house through messages given by the Spirit. The Spirit is no respecter of persons, and He frequently voices the opinions of floor members about the conduct of certain elders, or about decisions taken at meetings.

Secondly, it was suggested that Ibo conceptions of authority and methods of government were responsible for the virtual elimination of bands from the political life of the prayer-house. For in Lagos, the

elders of the Order's prayer-houses rule by belonging to some of the many praying bands. But the Serafim at Fegge stressed the principle of government by elders-in-council on the lines of elders' councils in the village. Until 1966 there were only five bands in the prayer-house; none shared in policy-making. Nevertheless, the elders keep a careful watch on the weekly visioners meeting, because it is there that the men of God express the Spirit's opinion about Serafim affairs. The main contribution of the founding elders, however, was that they used the bond of common local origin to direct events from within the framework of committees that developed after 1958. The contribution of the caucus to stable administration was only possible because the trading elders from the Nkpologu area were not liable to be transferred every two years; as is the case for white-collar or skilled workers.

Finally, social changes in the membership over the years influenced the direction of relationships. Many of the members who were recruited from outside Nkpologu and Uga were artisans, technicians and clerks. It was the white-collar workers in particular who did much to press for administrative reforms, and who supplied the secretaries who coped with the procedures for running the new system of government by committees. Then there was the emerging age differential between men holding the roles of elder and floor member, so that the authority of the elders, which is partly based on age seniority, was reinforced. At the same time, the role of floor member was more associated with the younger members who, free of the responsibilities of maturer men, are nearer to

the Spirit. It is from the floor that visioners emerge, communicating opinions to the elders from the floor in ritual terms through the vehicle of the Spirit. Thus, the ageing of the elders emphasised the correlation between youth and the roles of visioner and floor member, and contributed to the process of marking out each of the three roles more precisely.

However, while the divisions between these roles became more evident by the 1960's, the part played by the men of God in linking these roles, and therefore the main elements in the structure of relationships, also grew clearer. This happens by way of the actions of members who combine the role of visioning with that of a junior elder or floor member. All visioners emerge from the floor so that in 1966 about seven male floor members also held the role of man of God in the prayer-house. At the same time four junior elders were accredited with this role, but no senior elder was also a visioner because the duties of elderhood eventually override those of visioning.

Whereas the role of man of God links elders and floor members, the recent proliferation of sub-committees brings the senior elders close to one another. As I mentioned before, the annointed elders have monopolised all committee work so that they are in full control of such avenues to formal leadership (see p.106). There are five permanent sub-committees which administer the collection of tithes, ordination, the printing press, the evangelical fund and the affairs of the prayer-houses in Onitsha district. There are three others concerned with the Adoption, Cherubim and Serafim anniversaries which come into operation once a year. These

sub-committees are nearly all run by the nine most senior elders who are Pastors, Evangelists and Apostles: more junior elders usually hold the role of secretary. Thus, the same elders hold several sub-roles on different committees. Leadership by a few senior Serafim on the various committees therefore meshes the elders together. But at the same time, dissension spreads more quickly than if each committee was handled by different elders. Nevertheless, it is by such means that the caucus have retained control over the machinery of administration; as the rulers of the prayer-house they have subordinated the potentially troublesome men of God, enhancing their own power.

To compare the role structure of the Fegge prayer-house with that of the Order in Lagos, we have seen that the main features are, on the whole, similar. There are three principal roles which are sanctioned by customary or charismatic criteria of authority. But the roles of elder and man of God are also linked on the normative level, because elders too are endowed with the lesser attributes of healing and praying. All sub-roles are ranked in a hierarchy of authority; and the annual ordination ceremony confers the legitimising charisma of the founder on ordinands. Relationships in the Order have been routinised to the extent that when members in the east attend services at a branch in Lagos, they find that the order of worship is the same as in the east. Although their duties as elders are the same as in the east, they do, however, discover that praying bands play an important part in administering the affairs of prayer-houses in Lagos. The Order can therefore

be viewed as a bureaucracy, in that the general principles of organisation in eastern and Lagos prayer-house are similar. However, as I argued in this chapter, the process of interaction between the Serafim at Fegge, as well as the influence of factors originating in the wider field of Iboland modified the machinery of administration in certain significant respects, and influenced the way in which elders' sub-roles were taken up.

### CHAPTER 3

#### Belief and Ritual in the Prayer-House

My intention in the subsequent discussion of belief and ritual in the Fegge prayer-house is to examine the religious norms and values which buttress and sanction the role structure. I am principally concerned with the ultimate values of the congregation at Fegge, which justify the moral virtues prescribed for attaining a harmonious relationship between Serafim and their God. But since the early members at Fegge were taught about the main tenets of the Order as they evolved at Mt. Zion, Lagos, it is obviously important to place the doctrine, faith and beliefs of Serafim at Fegge within the wider context of Ibo and Yoruba religion, and Christianity.

The chapter begins with a brief outline of certain features of Yoruba and Ibo religion. This should help us to assess whether any elements of the customary religious institutions found in Iboland have modified the ideology of the Order, as it was first taught to the foundation members by prophetess Esther. For as I mentioned in the Introduction, Tunolashe's Praying Band of Serafim was - among other things - an expression of the interaction between Christianity and traditional Yoruba religious beliefs (see pp.16-19). The major part of the chapter is, however, taken up with an analysis of belief and ritual

in the prayer-house, which leads us in Chapter 4 to those most effective exponents of doctrine and norms - the men of God, who relate belief and behaviour on the prayer-house floor through the ritual of visioning the messages sent by the Spirit.

### Some Aspects of Yoruba and Ibo Religion

Yorubas believe that there is<sup>1</sup> a Supreme God, Oludumare, who is remote from man but is approachable through a pantheon of lesser deities called Orisa (D. Forde, 1951, p.29). The orisa are natural spirits and deified ancestors; there are also shrines in lineage compounds for the ancestors which are not identical with orisa worship. Oracles of divination are an important institution, as are the babalawo who divine and use medicine (substances) for good or evil purposes.

Although Oludumare is far from man, he is the force who puts life or emi into man (E. Idowu, 1962, p.169). The soul or inner personality, ori, which guides one through to one's pre-determined destiny derives from the Supreme God. The ori is sometimes thought of as a person's spiritual guardian, but this idea is more developed in the enikeji, or double of all men who acts as a guardian angel (ibid, p.173).

Among the Yoruba sin implies a breach of taboos on actions forbidden by Oludumare. Thus, ewo or sin is equated with immoral acts which occur when taboos are breached; the ancestors, divinities or Oludumare himself are then offended. Some typical taboos are those forbidding adultery, beating a parent or breaking a covenant (ibid,p.149).

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1. I am using the ethnographic present: see footnote 2, p.96, for a brief statement as to why we can speak of a Yoruba people.



The concept of moral wrong-doing or offence is limited to acts disobeying the behests of Oludumare. But as Idowu has argued Eshu or the evil, capricious trickster will lead men into sin or wrong-doing if they do not keep on his right side (ibid, p.81).

One final point concerning Yoruba religion, which has implications for relationships between Serafim, is that the worshippers of an orisa each receive a covenant from the orisa, which requires that they are to enter into "good" behaviour<sup>1</sup> with one another. Since ritual cannot automatically protect the worshippers from misfortune, they must be vigilant and exercise some form of self-help.

Before commenting on the above points, it will be useful to consider some aspects of Ibo religion<sup>2</sup>. The Ibo world falls into three parts: that of man; that of the ancestral spirits (ndi mmuo), and the natural spirits (alosi), who also include the gods of the sun, thunder and so forth; and that of God or Chukwu (D. Forde and G. Jones, 1950, p.25). Since Chukwu is remote from man, the alosi are important intermediaries between man and God. The alosi are headed by ani, the earth goddess, who is the source and judge of morality in the absence of a God who is near to man. Although God is far away, he is alleged by Basden to be thought of as waging a continual struggle against Ekwensu, the evil one (G. Basden, 1920, p.221).

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1. Idowu's expression (ibid, p.152).

2. See page 97 where I give some of the common institutions of the Ibos, which justifies our calling them a people who speak the same language with dialectal variations.

Sin is equated with the violation of taboos or alu. Instances of alu are theft, adultery, murder, homicide, poisoning and the like. Such offences are expiated by sacrifice at ani, the public earth shrine, for alu has repercussions on the ritual state of the home, village or village-group. There are, however, lesser offences which do not have any wider effects on the community. These are known as nso in Onitsha village-group (interviews<sup>1</sup>, Inland Town, 1966), and are not thought of as sin because ani, the ancestors and God are not affected. Typical instances of nso would be a fight in a shrine, the breaking of an idol by chance or a menstruating woman entering a shrine by accident (ibid).

Every man and woman has a ci or guiding spirit which is given by Chukwu, and a soul or nkpolobi which returns to Chukwu on death like the ci (ibid). The idea of ajobi, or bad mind, is often used to refer to the evil intentions of amosu or witches who operate at night by using animal familiars and cause harm without any substances. Today, however, amosu can be young women, and they can also use medicine to injure their victim (ibid)<sup>2</sup>. The native doctors or ndi dibe make good and bad medicines, and can ward off the attacks of witches by their spells or potions. They can also be diviners and have the power of visioning (ifu ife).

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1. These interviews were conducted in Inland Town during 1966 with native doctors, the Ndichie chiefs, Ozo title holders and residents of this old village-group.
  2. It seems that the old distinction between magic, or the manipulation of substances to control the supernatural, and witchcraft, or the ability to harm a victim by some emanation or other, has been blurred - assuming that it ever existed. See M. Fortes and G. Dieterlen, 1965, pp.23-24, for a discussion of the often arbitrary distinction between witches and sorcerers based on the Azande model.

There were also oracle priests in certain areas of Iboland, who specialised in foreseeing the future, like priests of the Agbala oracle at Awka.

Despite the hazards involved in making comparative generalisations, it is safe to say that Ibo and Yoruba religions do share some common elements. God is so distant that intermediaries are postulated who become the foci of man's supplications. Since God is presumed to be a benevolent principle, a trickster or evil being is invoked to explain the existence of wrong-doing; while the malicious intentions of enemies, witches and the like account for the difficulties of life. Yorubas and Ibos believe in a soul, as well as a guardian spirit or angel: both soul and guardian spirit return to the life-giver, God, on the death of the body. The idea of sin is identified with breaking taboos. Such ritual offences can rebound upon the ritual state of the entire community bringing illness, death or famine, so rites of cleansing and propitiation are carried out to placate the angered spirits or ancestors. The Ibos of Onitsha also distinguish minor offences which are not taboos because they do not affect the community: in other words, the legitimacy of the social order is not questioned.

Owing to the overall similarity of Ibo and Yoruba religious beliefs concerning - very generally - God, man and sin, it is difficult to pin-point any beliefs among Serafim at Fegge which owe their origin to the influence of Ibo customary religion. It seems that the common principles underlying these religions have interacted with the basic

elements of Christian doctrine to produce modes of thinking about the supernatural, man and misfortune which are current throughout Ibo and Yorubaland<sup>1</sup>. It is, however, in an aladura church like the Order that we can discover these popular ideas ritualised and elaborated into a distinctive corpus of liturgy, ritual aids and fundamentalist ethics which, in the case of the Order, hinge on the men of God. There are certainly variations of emphasis between those aladuras of which we have knowledge.<sup>2</sup> But the basic approach is the same; and the significance of the aladuras lies in the way in which they have evolved articles of faith which reflect suppositions shared by many of those who never actually join.

More specifically, we shall see how the prayer-house at Fegge relies on a hierarchy of intermediaries to act as a go-between for members when they approach God. Like their brothers in western Nigeria, Serafim at Fegge believe God is remote. Satan is an evil mischief-maker,

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1. This statement is, of course, subjective as well as sweeping. But in the absence of any hard facts, it seems justifiable in the present context to resort to personal impressions. My opinion in this matter is based on a knowledge of the Serafim in Lagos and of the personal religious attitudes of some members of the Church Missionary Society in the east; talks with prophets and members of several aladura bodies in Onitsha; and observations of the elite at work and at play in Onitsha.
  2. The Church of the Lord, for instance, has been influenced by the founder's early contacts with the Christ Apostolic Church, and by the present head's formal biblical learning in England at theological college. This church stresses revelation, but the Christ Apostolic Church emphasises healing by faith alone. In Onitsha, some aladuras become Sabbatarian, as a means of differentiating themselves from the majority who agree that Sunday is the seventh day. Yet others build up an elaborate corpus of magical signs, symbols and formulae for aiding powerful prayer.

continually deceiving men and warring against God. Like their ancestors, the Ibo Serafim in Onitsha believe in a guardian angel who, in these days of literacy, records all their sins in a notebook. Again, sin tends to be equated with the rupture of taboos so that the congregation, who are all affected, act together in rites of cleansing and purification to clear away the pollution thus caused.

It is, therefore, apparent that the religious beliefs of the Serafim in Onitsha have certain elements in common with customary Yoruba and Ibo religious thought. But before I go on to examine the doctrine, faith and ritual of the prayer-house, I will look briefly at some aspects of Christian belief and denominational organisation in Iboland which bear upon this aladura church in Onitsha.

### The Christian Heritage

Alike in their evangelical fervour, the Catholic and Protestant missions in eastern Nigeria<sup>1</sup> preached the gospel of Christ the saviour, But whereas the Protestants emphasised the stark truth of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who is directly approachable by man, the Catholics came equipped with an array of mediating saints and angels. By the early 1950's the missions had succeeded in converting over fifty per cent of the population in the east to Christianity (Census of eastern Nigeria, 1953, vol.1, p.9). However, the greater resources of the Catholic church enabled it to build more schools than the Protestants, considered separately,

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1. The first Catholic mission arrived in 1885 at Onitsha, and the first Protestant mission, which was organised by the Presbyterian church of Scotland, arrived at Calabar in 1846. The Church Missionary Society, representing the Anglican church, got to Onitsha in 1857.

so that the Catholics are now the largest denomination in the east with four times as many adherents as the Protestants<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, the wide coverage of the Catholic machine does not explain why their adherents are less prone than the Protestants to conversion by the aladuras<sup>2</sup>. It would seem that much of the answer to this problem lies in the doctrine and organisation of the Catholic church. Essentially authoritarian, the church accords wide powers to the priest in charge who closely supervises the pastoral needs of his flock. Although many Catholic churches are large, the institution of devotional societies ensures that the congregation is gathered into more intimate groups who pray for each other, look after the sick and so forth. Furthermore, the liturgy of the Church is exotic, rigidly fixed and apparently conceals many secrets in the esoteric ritual of the mass.

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1. According to the Catholic Directory of 1965, there are 1,996,357 Catholics in the three eastern arch-dioceses. Not all Catholics included in this estimate are necessarily baptised members. On the other hand, the Church Missionary Society had 250,000 baptised members in the three dioceses of Owerri, the Niger and the Niger Delta (estimates given by the Church Missionary Society headquarters in Onitsha, the seat of the West African arch-bishopric). There were also about another 120,000 baptised members of smaller Protestant churches like the Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian missions.
  2. In my sample, sixty-seven per cent of the Serafim interviewed at Fegge had Protestant affiliations. In Ibadan, Peel's sample of forty-one Serafim showed that about three-quarters had come to Oke Seni from Protestant churches (J. Peel, 1966, p.362). And Turner's analysis of 277 case histories of Church of the Lord adherents in West Africa showed that, while recruits from the Anglican and Methodist churches formed over half of the 277 cases, the Catholics only contributed thirty-five members (H. Turner, 1967, vol.2, p.10). Both Peel and Turner have remarked on the fact that the aladuras they studied recruited very few pagans.

In comparison with the Catholic church the Church Missionary Society, for instance, is loosely organised, there are a few secular meetings for women or youths, and the simple liturgy has little to conceal. More important even, the typical Protestant stress on self-help, repentance by faith in Christ, and individual salvation encourages proselytism. A Protestant will not fall into eternal damnation if he attends prayers at an aladura church. There are, therefore, strong reasons for supposing that Catholics are mostly kept within their own church by the close supervision of the priest, the attractions of an array of mediating saints and angels, and the institution of the devotional society.

#### The Prayer-House: Denominational Origins

I have just mentioned that the prayer-house at Fegge is drawn mainly from Protestant converts. In fact they are mainly former members of the Church Missionary Society, because this is the Protestant denomination which has the most schools and churches in the home-towns of the Serafim at Fegge. The majority come from settlements located within a thirty to seventy mile radius of Onitsha: I discuss this point in Chapter 6. Table 3.1 shows that sixty-seven per cent of the members in my sample had Church Missionary Society affiliations, but only twenty-two per cent were former members of the Catholic church. It should be noted that this ratio is the reverse of the probable proportion of Protestants and Catholics in Onitsha: of the control group over fifty per cent were Catholic adherents.

Table 3.1    The Denominational Origins of Serafim, Onitsha

<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Fegge Prayer-House</u>	<u>Inland Town and Fegge Branches</u>	<u>Control Group Fegge and Inland Town</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Church Missionary Society	67.0	62.0	24.4
Roman Catholic Mission	22.0	20.4	51.1
Other	6.2	10.7	5.8
Pagan	4.0	6.1	18.4
<u>Total per cent</u>	99.2	99.2	99.7
<u>Total respondents</u>	79	113	103

Another significant point is that only four per cent of the members at Fegge were pagans. The early Praying Band of Serafim was composed of mainly Protestant Christians; and both Abiodun and Tunolashe had Church Missionary Society links (see Chapter 1, pp.41-42). It is apparently a common feature of the aladuras that they fail to recruit pagans in significant numbers<sup>1</sup>. In the case of the Eternal Sacred Order, the urban branches in the east have fewer pagans than the prayer-houses back home where pagans are more evident. To this extent, then, the low proportion of pagan converts at Fegge is also a function of the social composition of the wider population in Onitsha, which is predominantly Christian and literate.

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1. See footnote 2, page 121.



### The Prayer-House: Why They Join

The reasons members give for joining the prayer-house are of more than nominal significance. Such explanations are to some degree suspect because they are given after the event. But they do indicate the way in which members, as Christians and citizens of a society still imbued with certain customary institutions, view man's relationship to other men and God. Two-thirds of the Serafim interviewed at Fegge first came on account of such material problems as ill-health, unemployment, barrenness, temptations from enemies or the like. Only one-third said they joined because they were interested in a spiritual church.

Nearly one-half of the elders said they joined for religious reasons. But the low proportion of floor members claiming this reason - about one-quarter - indicates that elders are prone to rationalising their views of why they became Serafim. This is probably due to the responsibilities of elders, which makes them more self-conscious about the tenets of their faith. The large number of members joining on account of sickness points to the inability of many Serafim at Fegge to afford private medical care, which gives patients better service, and to the existence of psychosomatic illness<sup>1</sup>. Serafim often claim that when they abandon physiological treatment at the hospitals, they experience relief from headaches, pains all over the body and burning sensations. Instead, they experience the mental therapy of visions which point out the enemies who are jealousing them; new recruits also find

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1. Marjory Field gives an excellent account of typical cases brought to some rural shrines in Ghana (1960, pp.149-464). See also the book "Psychiatric Disorders Among the Yoruba", by Leighton and Lambo (1963, pp.263-288).

comfort in the individual attention given them by the men of God in praying sessions. Here, they and the men of God get the spiritual power which wards off the evil-minded.

Table 3.2    Reasons for Joining the Prayer-House, Fegge

<u>Type of Reason</u>	<u>Elders</u>	<u>Floor</u>	<u>Prayer- Receivers</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Per Cent Grand Total</u>
<u>Religious</u>					
Manifestations of the Holy Spirit	8	3		11	
Interest in a spiritual church	8	7	3	18	
To preach	1			1	
<u>Total</u>	17	10	3	30	33.3
<u>Secular</u>					
Temptations, protection from enemies		5	5	10	
Unemployment or work troubles	2	1		3	
Barrenness	2	2		4	
Ill-health	10	16	1	27	
Husband, wife or kin took members	6	8	1	15	
<u>Total</u>	20	32	7	59	66.2
GRAND TOTAL	37	42	10	89	99.5

The importance of unemployment, temptations, and ill-health in attracting members to the prayer-house for help, shows that the prayer-house is orientated towards giving religious solutions to material problems. For cures are believed to be effected, even if only

temporarily, by the spiritual techniques of prayer with ritual aids, and by drinking holy water and oil. This points to the widespread currency of customary beliefs concerning the power of supernatural beings and forces to determine the course of events. The evil actions of others are believed to be among the most important reasons for misfortune. Typical enemies are said to be competitors at work, kin at home, or women in the yard who envy the fertility of others more fecund than them. Since bad luck is interpreted in terms of strained relationships<sup>1</sup>, visioners, like the divining native doctors of the Ibos, point out the person jealousing the suppliant. Thus it is that the prayer-house represents an effective synthesis of Christian faith in the Pentecostal aspects of the Holy Spirit, and customary beliefs in the reality of evil forces and spirits, which must be controlled and warded off by the spiritual power obtained by strong prayer.

#### The Prayer-House: Doctrine<sup>2</sup>

Whereas some other aladura churches like the Church of the Lord have published successive statements of their church's understanding of its role as a religious organisation<sup>3</sup> (H. Turner, 1967, vol.2, pp.375-378)

1. Robin Horton, among others, has recently analysed such conceptions in West Africa (see Africa vol.38, no.1, 1967, p.54).
2. The subsequent discussion is drawn from the following sources: sermon texts recorded at Fegge; cases of personal troubles, illness and the like; interviews and informal talks with elders, visioners and floor members. There is also the pamphlet "The Order" which sets out the main doctrinal principles of the Eternal Sacred Order. I also conducted interviews in 1966 with Pastors and Elders in other churches in Onitsha: see Appendix B.
3. In this respect, the Eternal Sacred Order is probably more representative of popular conceptions of Christian doctrine than the Church of the Lord or the Christ Apostolic Church, whose leaders have been much influenced by the sophisticated and highly western approach of a few members.

the Order has not yet progressed beyond its early position as put forward in 1930. When Tunolashe founded the Order in 1930, it was stated in the Articles of Association that:

"the Order holds unshaken faith in the Holy Bible as the Word of God and in Salvation through Jesus Christ and in the Trinity...the use of incense, purification by prayers and fasting and the resurrection of the dead. Its first and primary work is that of prayer and the preaching of the Gospel. It believes in the curative effect of prayer for all afflictions...but condemns the use of charms or fetish, witchcraft or sorcery...It endorses and does practise the sanctification of water by prayer and the effect of such consecrated or Holy Water for every purpose" (The Articles of Association, 1930, p.3).

In this statement, the Order's doctrine is revealed as being based on the proclamation of faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, together with the use of prayer for all purposes. In the pamphlet "The Order", which was published in the early 1960's, all Serafim are merely commanded to love one another, to live by the ten commandments, and to preach the gospel which was revealed again through the prophet and founder Moses Orimolade Tunolashe.

However, sermon texts recorded at Fegge and the personally expressed beliefs of Serafim stress the divine origins of the Order - "the Cherubim and Serafim was made in Heaven"<sup>1</sup> - and its spiritual basis. "We follow the Spirit and not the flesh", because God as a spirit is actively at work in Serafim. Serafim are also "God's chosen people", who are to confound the rich lost in their corrupt luxurious surrounding. Sure that they are a "light to the world" and the "new Israelites", Serafim

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1. All remarks in quotes are those made by Serafim.

can withstand the taunts and jeers of the worldly, who abuse them for being "foolish aladuras", and send in spies armed with charms to disrupt the ritual state of the prayer-house. Puzzled by the spiritual gifts of the men of God, the Catholics and Protestants allegedly believe that Serafim practise juju and black magic. Although other Christians scoff at the "dancing Serafim", they are sufficiently tantalised to cause trouble by charging members to watch the men of God at work. But the Serafim, confident of their holy mission handed down by the founder Tunolashe, reaffirm their faith in their church as a universal brotherhood entrusted with the holy task of evangelising the world over (The Articles of Association: 1930, p.2.).<sup>1</sup>

#### The Prayer-House: Faith and Belief

Members distinguish between the three worlds of man, the spirits and angels, and God. God is the creator of mankind who is also manifested through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is recognised to be God's Son, who gave a new sacrifice of blood, which has taken over from "the blood of fowls" in removing the barriers of sin and guilt between man and God. But apart from the powerfulness of Jesus's name when invoked in prayers, Jesus himself is submerged in the emphasis of Serafim on God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

God is far from man, so He works through the help of an army of angels who carry messages and blessings from Heaven to earth: these are

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1. The doctrine and the main articles of faith of the Order are taught to all branches. Thus, the general elements of formal belief are the same for all Serafim, wherever they are, as is true of any church.

revealed by the men of God. Although God is merciful, He is also capable of great anger if provoked by disobedient Serafim who break the taboos and rules of the Order. As one Seraf said: "He works for man when it pleases Him". God is a spirit who knows and observes all things; he can appear to visioners as an old white-bearded man sitting on a cloud, surrounded by hundreds of angels with caucasian skins and wings. In fact, God is so remote that His Son, Jesus, is often thought to have been an angel who came to earth in human form.

The main principle behind the faith and beliefs of members is that the world is divided into two opposing camps: evil spirits and angels led by Satan continually challenge good spirits and angels headed by the arch-angel Michael, who is the patron and captain of the Order. God and the Holy Spirit work through St. Michael and the three other arch-angels, as well as their subordinates such as the Fogo angels or the Army of Salvation. Michael carries the "sword of power", and captains the army of Christian soldiers, in heaven and on earth, who have to contend with the evil machinations of Satan and his band. A colourful theodicy has grown up about the four arch-angels and Satan<sup>1</sup>.

Michael defends all godly people from temptation, evil spirits and the like and is stationed in the east; Gabriel delivers blessings to people, grants fertility and burns incense around the throne of God - he is stationed in the west; Uriel holds the keys to Heaven and the

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1. In 1966 I interviewed Pastors and elders of other aladura churches and Pentecostal missions in Onitsha. The arch-angels are believed by some to include others who work for Satan. Satan uses these angels to trick men into thinking they bring blessings from God.

stores therein, being stationed in the north; and Raphael heals the sick, leads the doctors and nurses in Heaven and is stationed in the south (The Order, 1960's, pp.43-44). The functions of Michael and Gabriel are drawn from the scriptures, mainly Daniel and Revelation. Likewise the functions of Cherubim and Serafim angels are based on passages in Ezekiel and Isaiah: whereas the Cherubim fight for God because they are virile warriors, the Serafim praise God, representing the female qualities of pacificity and great beauty of countenance.

Satan himself was once a good angel, second in command to God. But on disobeying God, he was expelled from Heaven by Michael. Satan then lost his beautiful multi-coloured dress and wore the black of evil, thus becoming identifiable as an evil spirit. The angels of God on the other hand, are always clothed in white, representing the clean soul so desired by Serafim. After Satan left Heaven he was known as "Lucifer the deceiver", who prowls and roams on earth, continually causing confusion. Lucifer and his evil spirits pester visioners by making them give incorrect messages (i.e. the visioner uses his "mind" in interpreting a message brought by an angel); and he mobilises evil forces who can act through witches and juju. Satan and his evil band can obstruct messages and blessings, thus indicating that as in customary religious belief, evil spirits can prevail on occasions over the powers of the angels and God<sup>1</sup>. However, angels too can be capricious and

1. Turner states that the Church of the Lord is truly Christian (i.e. it follows orthodox western theology) in this respect, because there is believed to be no bargaining between good and evil spirits. It is doubtful whether all adherents of the Church of the Lord have rejected such beliefs in view of their wide currency in both Yoruba and Iboland (see H. Turner, 1967, vol.2, p.362).

withhold blessings, so visioners explain that "unclean members" have polluted the prayer-house and driven the angels away.

Man is at the bottom of the spiritual hierarchy, and it is by obeying the ten commandments and loving all men that he shows his desire to please God. Above all, men can open a path to God by keeping clean in body and mind, as white as their prayer-gowns and the angels in Heaven. To this end love is vital: "without love we perish", wallowing in a mire of sin and corruption and unable to harness God's spiritual power. God refuses to answer prayers if supplicants are in a state of sin, if the time is not yet ripe, or if He has not yet decided to act.

There are two kinds of sin or nso which can be committed by members: Serafim sin when they either break a taboo, or disobey the Order's rules<sup>1</sup>, the ten commandments, and the precepts of Jesus and Paul which urge Christians live in love with one another. The taboos of the prayer-house (and of the Order) are aimed at preserving the ritual cleanliness of the prayer-house, so that members keep a path open to the angels and the Holy Spirit. Instances of these ritual prohibitions include injunctions against menstruating women, or members who have not washed their bodies after sexual intercourse entering the building. When a member breaks a taboo, special services are held to reconsecrate the prayer-house which has been polluted: the Spirit can not enter a prayer-house which is in such a state.

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1. The most important of these rules are stated in "The Order" (1960's, pp.1-3): to a large degree they subsume the ten commandments.



Members commit a second kind of sin when they break the rules of the Order by, for example, committing adultery with a brother's<sup>1</sup> wife. These offences are serious, but do not automatically endanger the ritual standing of the congregation as happens when taboos are broken. The same goes for Serafim who hate their neighbour or steal from a brother. Such wrong-doing is viewed more as matter for the individual whose fleshy desires have got the better of him. But at the same time, the congregation are also concerned because the Spirit abhors dissension between Serafim: He is driven away when members are tempted by Satan, and let the flesh get the better of them by breaking the Order's rules or taboos.

The concept of sin in the prayer-house is a basic element in the members' conception of their relationship with the good God, who saves them from the consequences of sin by His forgiveness. Taboos have been erected, which function to maintain and symbolise the ideal pure state of being required of all Serafim if they are to harness God's power. Taboos therefore demarcate role norms. Sin is both a collective matter as when taboos are broken, and a more personal affair as when a Seraf breaks the ten commandments and the Order's rules. Thus, the customary tendency to equate sin with ruptured taboos co-exists with the more Christian idea of sin, which corrupts the soul because of the body's fleshy desires.

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1. Unless I indicate otherwise, I am using the word brother in the way members do when speaking of their brothers in Christ.

For the members at Fegge, the ethical precepts of "love, peace and purity" represent their ultimate values: to live in love with man and God is the very obverse of sin which is identified with hatred, quarreling and pollution. God is love, above all else, and so by acting out a loving life even towards those who abuse us one is brought close to God and His spiritual power. This point, which sums up the faith of the prayer-house in a nutshell, is made twice weekly by the elders in their pastoral exhortations to the congregation from the pulpit. The following Table is based on thirty-five sermons I recorded at the Fegge prayer-house between February 1965 and May 1966.

Table 3.3    The Texts of Sermons Preached between February 1965 and May 1966 at Fegge

<u>Text</u>	<u>No. of times referred to</u>	<u>Theme</u>
Romans	11	Love fulfills the laws; faith; purity; God's punishments for evil-doers; pray always
Revelation	10	Listen to the Spirit; repent of your sins; the Crown of Life awaits the faithful on death
John	10	Eternal life through Jesus; abandon the flesh; these are the days of the Holy Spirit; love; Serafim are persecuted
Corinthians	9	Respect your spouse; think no evil; know the gifts of the Spirit; abandon the flesh; no adultery, fornication etc.
Mathew	8	Love; repent; ask and it will be given; abandon the flesh
Luke	7	Forgiveness of sins; have faith; abandon the flesh for Jesus Christ
Thessalonians	5	Do no evil; love; the Serafim are the elect of God
Mark	5	Have faith and be saved; damnation to the unbelievers
Others (including James, Jude, Acts - 1 each)	17	Obey the elders, fear God; have faith; love
<u>Total New Testament</u>	<u>82</u>	
Psalms	8	The peace of God; be obedient
1 and 2 Kings	4	Events
Isaiah	4	The sins of the people; the fruits of obeying God
Daniel	3	Michael saves Israel
Exodus	3	Moses and God; honour your father and mother
Others including Ecclesiastes, Leviticus and Deuteronomy	18	The sins of envy, idleness, greed; pay your tithes
<u>Total Old Testament</u>	<u>40</u>	
GRAND TOTAL	122	

There were four themes in the sermons I recorded which express the ultimate values of Serafim: have faith in God; repent and your sins will be forgiven; live the clean pure life; and love one another above everything else; because love subsumes all the ethics of the Christian life. It is significant that the majority of texts were taken from the New and not the Old Testament. In spite of the preoccupation with taboos, which are justified by the legalistic scriptures of Deuteronomy and Leviticus, the pastoral teaching of the elders is orientated towards two aspects of Christianity. The many quotations from Revelations illustrate the elders' interest in continually reaffirming the legitimacy of the more exotic and mystical aspects of their faith; that is, the existence of the angels and their important role as intermediaries. On the other hand, the more numerous quotations from the Gospels and the Epistles point to the members' emphasis on the moral teachings of Jesus, and the nature of Christian law as expounded by St. Paul in particular.

#### The Prayer-House: Ritual

The liturgy, or form of worship of the Order, is modelled on the Anglican prayer book. The Churchman's Calendar provides the daily lesson readings and the timing of the orthodox Christian festivals of Lent, Easter, Harvest and Christmas. The order of Worship for the daily and Sunday services does differ from that laid down in the Anglican prayer book. But the essential elements of any Anglican service are present in Serafim worship. These are: invocation, prayer for the forgiveness of sins by saying psalm 51 one, three or seven times,

psalm reciting, the singing of hymns drawn from the Anglican hymn book or Sankey, and pastoral teaching. Daily services are therefore recognisably Protestant in origin, as is Sunday morning prayers (matins), which is the focal point of the weekly cycle of worship.

The Christian rites of baptism, marriage, burial of the dead and holy communion are conducted by the elders in accordance with the liturgy laid down in the Anglican prayer-book. Ordination follows the Anglican ceremony, but there are certain accretions peculiar to the Order. But in addition to these liturgical forms, the Order has also evolved its own annual ceremonies and rites of Revival and Victory Prayer, which are devices to revitalise the spiritual fervour of members. At all times, however, Serafim worship by singing, clapping their hands and dancing vigorously to the sound of the tambourine, drum and bell<sup>1</sup>.

The Order has adopted six of the principal Anglican ceremonies<sup>1</sup>, but there are also eleven ceremonies and anniversaries peculiar to the Order, so that the annual cycle of worship is full to the brim with eighteen special anniversaries and feasts. Serafim anniversaries range from those dedicated to the four arch-angels to Adoption<sup>2</sup> (i.e. harvest), and the memorial service for the founder, Tunolashe. Most of these ceremonies were authorised by Tunolashe through vision, but some developed in the twenty years following his death. These include, for instance,

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1. Palm Sunday, Easter, Ascension Sunday, Whit Sunday, Harvest and Christmas.
  2. Serafim at Fegge say that "we do our Harvest monthly in our tithes". Adoption means that "we are the sons of God" (Genesis xvii; Romans viii 1-32), so that in the Adoption service Serafim celebrate their role as God's chosen sons.

the Adoption service which began in 1949 (Daily Bible Reading Pamphlet, 1965, p.45), or the memorial service for the founder which began in the early 1930's.

The services which are best attended are Easter, Christmas, Adoption, the Cherubim anniversary and St. Michael. The ~~the~~ <sup>latter</sup> ceremonies are very colourful, the elders processing through the prayer-house in exotic dress, carrying swords and chanting powerful words: the liturgy follows the order of worship for the daily service. But the lesson, sermon, and powerfully esoteric prayers which are conducted with all apertures closed to shut out evil spirits, are all stronger than the average service, so that the spiritual vitality of the congregation is renewed.

An important aspect of the services dedicated to the arch-angels Michael and Gabriel, and the Cherubim and Serafim angels, is that one or two sections of the congregation are united by a ritual enactment, which develops attributes of the principal roles that are normally not overtly noticeable. Thus, the elders act out one of their role attributes - the warrior qualities of St. Michael - by carrying swords throughout the ceremony: the congregation are Michael's subordinate angels, the Cherubim and Serafim who, in Heaven, work for Michael. But at the anniversary of Cherubim, for instance, all Cherubim who include elders and floor members, brothers and sisters, don the dress of a Cherub angel. The dress marks the identification of all Cherubim with one another, regardless of their role, vis a vis the Serafim who include the rest of

the congregation looking on. Thus, the special anniversaries of Serafim recharge the spiritual energies of the prayer-house; reaffirm the scriptural legitimacy of the beliefs and roles of the prayer-house; and temporarily submerge any personal hostilities, by linking one or two sections of the congregation together in the ritual of worship.

The institution of Revival and Victory Prayers is an important feature of the ritual cycle. Victory Prayers can be held at any time, for three or seven days when temptations beset members. It is the Spirit, through the men of God, who orders Victory and Revival Prayers. Victory Prayer is conducted on the same lines as the daily service, but differs in the use of seven candles, seven prayers and seven hymns; it is, as Serafim say, a particularly powerful means of "conquering all people planning evil to spoil the prayer-house", of uniting factions and of ironing out ill-will between Serafim<sup>1</sup>. The Revival Service is the same, except that the brother whom the Spirit says is in danger of death or illness gives a sermon on the wonderful things to be found in the prayer-house. This service is held for three days and is thought of as a specially powerful form of Victory Prayer, which guarantees that the trouble facing the man giving the sermon will be averted.

The religious life of the prayer-house is characterised by peak points in spiritual fervour, which are reached at the most powerful

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1. The same is true of the Love Feast which is held irregularly at the behest of the Spirit, when the congregation is at sixes and sevens. The Love Feast is a ritual meal conducted on the lines of Holy Communion but stripped of its sacramental aspect. Holy Communion is held once or twice a year "because Jesus only did it once" (interview Apostle Farrinde, May 9 1965).

anniversaries or the mainly social gathering for the Adoption service. The chart on page 140 shows how the orthodox Anglican cycle is interspersed with Serafim anniversaries, Revival and Victory Prayers - the latter tend to be held when attendance drops. According to the visioners and prophets, it is at such times that temptations increase, because of the careless attitude of Serafim to the Spirit (i.e. attendance drops at prayers).

### Belief and Ritual

The faith of members and the ritual of the prayer-house is, as I have argued, a synthesis of elements from two religions - Christianity and the customary religious beliefs of the Yorubas and Ibos. Regarding belief, Serafim profess the truth of the one God - the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - but their conception of the nature of this God, and the Christian life, has been much influenced by customary ideas of man's relationship to the supernatural. The formal liturgy of the prayer-house and the Order is heavily indebted to the Anglican model, but there are significant accretions which accommodate the emphasis on prayer and the important role of the angels in worship.

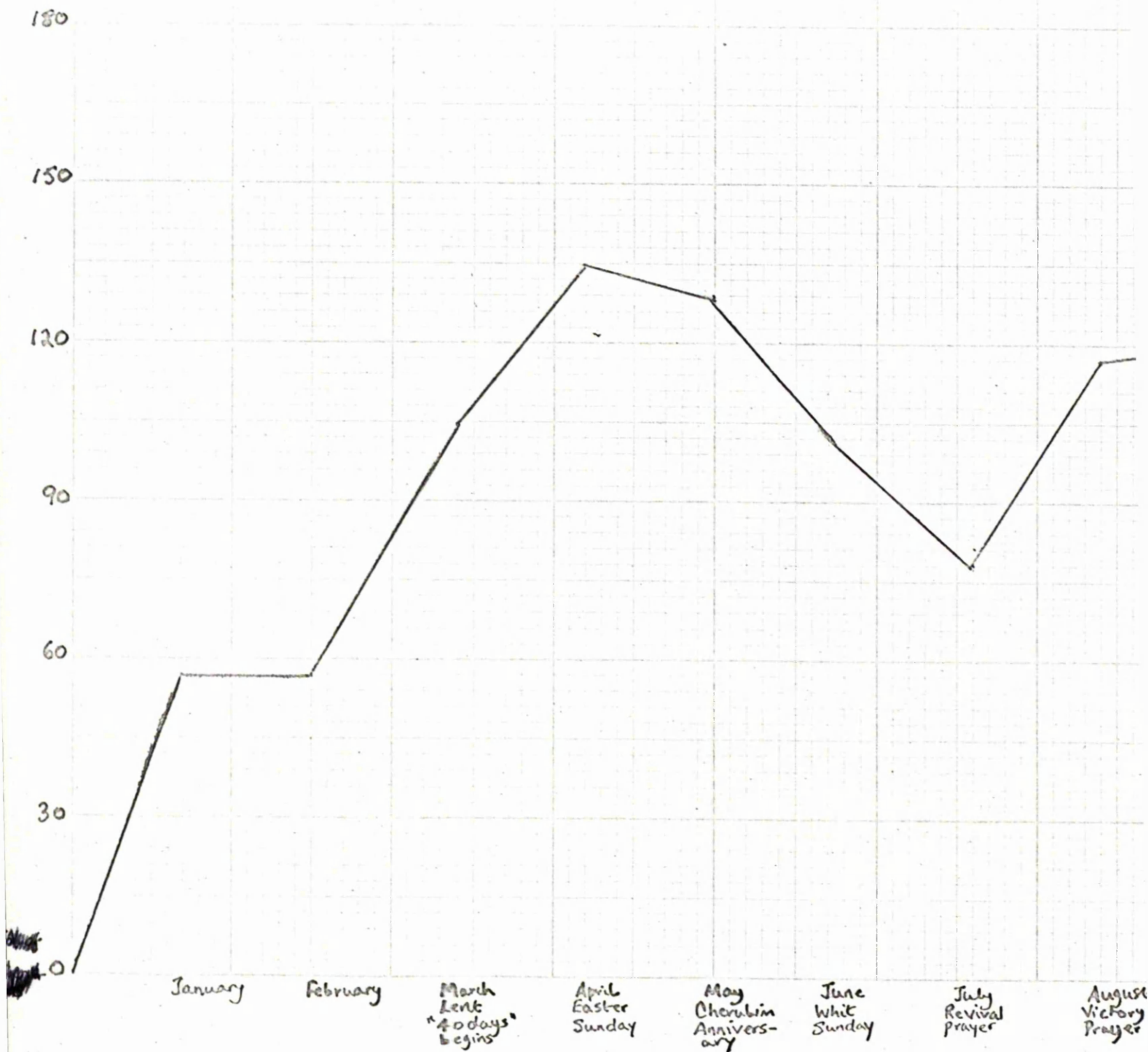
To sum up the main points of the preceding discussion, sin is the key concept of faith and belief. Members believe that they sin when they break the Order's taboos, or when they offend against the precepts of behaviour incumbent upon all Serafim. Taboos, the Order's rules which mostly subsume the ten commandments, and the moral teachings of the New Testament express and sanction the principal role norms of



Attend-  
ance  
numbers  
210

Chart 2

# Attendances At The Fegge Prayer-



all Serafim: to live in love, peace and purity. The ideal of love, which is the final ethic for Serafim, is seen as a state of non-sin because love opens the way to God who is love and goodness. But sin means hatred, and enmity between men which drives the Spirit away. The panapology of liturgy, which I have just discussed, has as its end the victory of man over the sin which corrupts his spirit.

The idea of sin is obviously a key aspect of the faith of the prayer-house, because it partly explains why misfortune occurs. God punishes us for our disobedience by thwarting our wishes, by sending illness and the like. But this is not the whole story. As we shall see, customary conceptions of ill-luck, which is due to the jealousy of enemies, play a vital part in determining how members tackle their problems. It is the belief that troubles can be attributed to hostile kin or work-mates, which has shaped the visioner's role, and stimulated the development of instrumental techniques for harnessing the spiritual power of God which guarantees protection and deliverance.

Thus far I have analysed the structure of role relationships in the prayer-house, and the doctrine, faith and beliefs of members which sanction the role structure. In the next chapter I shall explain how the visioners link belief, and role behaviour in the ritual of visioning on the prayer-house floor. It is here that the men of God re-state the norms of role behaviour in the ritual terms appropriate to charismatic figures.

## CHAPTER 4<sup>1</sup>

### Agencies of Role Control in the Prayer-House

Procedures for maintaining conformity to role norms form an important aspect of any study of relationships between the members of an association like the Eternal Sacred Order. But observing the mechanics of control is not merely a matter of looking at the kinds of penalties meted out to offenders<sup>2</sup>. More important, the sanctions exercised by different role holders tell us about the way in which authority is exercised; and about those values and norms which are most sacrosanct. Role control is above all a normative process designed to maintain the system as it is. But the very existence of different agencies for maintaining the integrity of the rules and ethical precepts of the prayer-house indicates that behaviour is often widely divergent from the ideal expected of Serafim.

There are no formally constituted courts or moots in the prayer-house, so control is a matter of jural, ritual and informal social processes. The principal agents for checking deviancy are the elders and the men of God. It is, however, the visioners and prophets who

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1. My sources of information for this account of control are based on sermons and visions recorded at ninety services I attended at the Fegge prayer-house; interviews with elders, prophets and floor members; case studies; and the pamphlet "The Order".
  2. See for example K. Little (1965, pp.93-102), for an account of his own, and the work of other students of associations in West Africa, which exemplifies this kind of approach.

link the different procedures for bringing behaviour into line with role norms in the ritual of visioning on the prayer-house floor.

Thus, in a typical case the disapproving reaction of certain members to flirtatious conduct between a brother and sister is quickly taken up by the men of God, who issue warning messages from the Holy Spirit about the temptations which will befall the immoral couple. Should their flirtation or affair continue, the visioners either press the elders to suspend the offenders, or else the elders take the matter up at the request of interested members.

For the sake of clarity I propose to distinguish between three categories of role control agencies according to the processes involved. It should be pointed out, however, that when it comes to deviancy from the norms of the prayer-house, the total process of imposing conformity generally goes through phases which involve elements from all three categories. But to begin with we have the organised secular and ritual sanctions wielded by the elders and men of God respectively: both categories of role holders exert positive and negative sanctions in the prayer-house.

Then there are informal and diffuse sanctions, as unpleasant gossip or disassociation from an offender, which owe their effectiveness to the fact that role relationships are based on the conduct expected of actors by others (see Introduction, pp.29-30). Failure to behave in the manner prescribed by the attributes of the role held arouses the disapproval, and even the hostility, of Serafim with whom the deviant

is interacting; the congregation often react in a similar manner when they hear about such an incident. Such built-in expectations apply across the line between, for example, elders and the men of God, and between the holders of the same sub-role, as all Rabbis. We saw in Chapter 2 how the elders in the prayer-house came to view their duties as being concerned with administration, while they associated the visioners and prophets with the affairs of the Spirit (see Chapter 2, pp.90-92). Likewise, sub-role holders identified themselves with particular functions which gave them a delimited sphere of control over subordinates. Leaders, for instance, who assume the authority and duties of Pastors will soon be reminded of their proper place in the hierarchy.

Finally, we have what might be called maintenance rituals that reaffirm the ultimate values of the prayer-house. Rituals like the anniversary of St. Michael re-state the legitimacy of the elders's authority by equating them with their heavenly counterpart - the archangel Michael (see Chapter 3, p.137). Again, Victory Prayer or the Love Feast smooths over strained relationships between Serafim, because status distinctions are temporarily submerged. This happens in Victory Prayer as a result of the fervour of intense prayer, and in the Love Feast, the equality of all Serafim as God's sons is stated in the ritual partaking of water from the same cup, and of bread from the same plate. Rituals as these, which symbolise the unity of all Serafim in the brotherhood of Christ, are an important but more indirect agency of collective control.

The total process of role control draws on organised and diffuse sanctions, as well as maintenance rituals to maintain conformity to role norms. On many occasions, control begins when a member is, for instance, seen smoking hemp or cigarettes. The word is passed around, and Serafim in the know murmur their disapproval of the offender who has broken a minor taboo. These diffuse sanctions are taken up by the visioners and prophets, and ritualised by messages from the Spirit which condemn such immoral conduct. Temptations and illness are generally promised as a fit punishment for the brother; should these organised ritual sanctions fail, the men of God tackle the annointed elders. The two Apostles and the caucus then summon the brother, reprimanding him. If he persists, he may be told to stay away for two or three weeks to think the matter over, because the Spirit brings temptations to Serafim who do not heed His messages. And why should everyone be punished with illness or accidents because of the misdemeanours of one brother?

However, on other occasions the process is reversed. Two brothers who quarrel may go direct to the two Apostles giving their respective versions of the dispute, each seeking to put himself in the right before gossipers tell the Apostles about it. The visioners and prophets, on hearing about the quarrel, issue visions condemning the "bad mind" of both or one of the brothers, threatening the wrath of the Spirit which results in sickness, loss of promotion and the like. Since members all know one another, it is easy for them to guess who is being referred to in the vision if the brothers are not named. In this way all members

get to know about the quarrel, and express their opinion to one another.

Each category of role holder may be thought of <sup>as</sup> exercising different types of sanctions. Floor members who are without formal authority exercise diffuse secular sanctions over their fellow brothers and sisters; the men of God wield organised ritual sanctions over elders, floor members and each other; and the elders exert diffuse and organised secular sanctions vis a vis themselves, the men of God and the floor members. It is, however, the visioners and prophets who link the different sanctions exercised by role holders in the ritual of visioning on the prayer-house floor. This begins when the man of God who has received messages from the angels gets up and declares, "before God and man!". Should a visioner knowingly twist his visions, Serafim say that the religious oath he has just sworn "will kill him". The man of God stands up to declare his visions, dreams and trances but the elders and the floor all remain seated in silence. They listen to warnings about death, accidents and illness which will befall offenders who are either named or unnamed and can include the elders. Less often, Serafim are assured of God's blessing and protection granted through the angels present. But the men of God usually take the process of control into the next stage of protective agencies, when they order prayers to be held for Serafim facing temptation.

This, then, in outline, is the process of role control in the prayer-house. I now propose to examine socialisation in the prayer-house, which leads to a consideration of the way in which organised and

diffuse secular and ritual sanctions are applied in different situations. The chapter concludes with an analysis of a case which illustrates the total process of role control.

### Socialisation in the Prayer-House

Although prayer-receivers who decide to become Serafs do not find anything alien in the prayer-house's emphasis on prayer, retribution for one's sins, or the important part played by enemies in causing misfortune, socialisation is still a significant aspect of initiation into the prayer-house. For the effectiveness of control is based on the assumption that members are prepared to accept the necessity of conforming to the ethics of the prayer-house. In addition, new recruits have to learn to discipline themselves, so that their behaviour inside and outside the prayer-house is in line with the values prescribed for Serafim.

Many members admit that their Christian faith was only skin-deep when they first joined the prayer-house. They did not strive to carry out the ten commandments or to emulate the life of Jesus in any way. Members who become deeply committed to the "spiritual way of worship" - as they put it - undergo a traumatic experience on entry akin to conversion<sup>1</sup>. Realising that fornication, rough behaviour, cursing and smoking cigarettes or hemp are "hateful to the Spirit", they abandon their old ways and strive to live up to the two cardinal moral precepts of the prayer-house: love thy neighbour and thy God. For how can

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1. This appears to be a fairly common phenomenon in aladura or Zionist churches. See P. Mayer, 1961, p.198, for an account of the conversion experience of some members of the Bhengu church in East London, S. Africa.



you hate your neighbour and at the same time love your God whom you cannot even see?

Thus, having accepted the Serafim way as the only meaningful one for them, members are prepared to incorporate the values and ethics of the prayer-house into their own lives. Much initial instruction takes place through the bible class and the sermon. As we saw in Chapter 3 (pp.133-135), the elders focus on the final goals of Serafim in their pastoral exhortations - the need to have the faith in God which leads one to a life of love and purity. Nevertheless, it seems that the most important factor in value transformation is exemplary. The charismatic powers of the visioners and prophets are proof that other Serafim too can grasp the Spirit by hard prayer and fasting, for all members "are sons of God and potential priests", as the Serafim say. From a negative point of view, the example of visioners rebuking a brother for misconduct is frequently sufficient proof for the new initiate that the Spirit punishes and sees all misdemeanours<sup>1</sup>. Again, the personal integrity of the elders is an example to new members<sup>2</sup>, and an important aspect of their ability to impose effective sanctions. The greater the esteem of an elder, the more he is hearkened to.

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1. Many new members think the visioners are able to do what they do by black magic and spells.
  2. At first enthusiastic recruits identify the one or two elders they know best with all the elders. The phrase, "the elders are holy here", is frequently on their lips. Needless to say, new members begin to discriminate between the personal morality of different elders after some months in the prayer-house.

When a new brother joins the prayer-house, he learns that instead of addressing his wife as "wife" or "woman", he is to call her "sister". Likewise a woman now calls her husband "brother", abandoning for the most part the customary term "master" -- at least in public. The terms brother and sister indicate the equality of men and women before God as His children. Although this practice is an advance on customary relationships from the woman's point of view, the actual marital relationship between husband and wife seems to be cast in terms of the husband's rights and prerogatives. Man's role as the progenitor of women, which is summed up in the story of Adam and Eve, is a favourite with the brothers who use such scriptural references to justify their marital role as lord and master, and the inferior position of the women in the prayer-house: no woman exercises political power of any kind.

Thus, socialisation mainly takes place with regard to the important precepts which guide daily behaviour, preventing Serafim from driving away the angels by sinning. Members learn, often for the first time in their lives, the importance of self-discipline and the subjugation of the flesh. They also acquire values which predispose them to accept the dictates of the elders and the men of God; clean living and the prayers provided by the prayer-house grant protection against enemies and the consequences of sin.

#### Rules and Taboos

Both the elders and the men of God are concerned with deviant behaviour, which is assessed by the importance of the rule or taboo

which has been infringed. The rules and taboos which members learn about on joining are justified in general by the scriptural saying, "if there is no law, it is an abomination".

It was Tunolashe who revealed again the meaning of these prescriptions which are based on the scriptures.

The main offences against the rules of the prayer-house are adultery with a brother or sister in Christ, fornication with another member, theft from a Serafim, fighting on the prayer-house floor and taking money for visions (see "The Order", 1960's, pp.1-2). Once adultery is found out, the offending couple are immediately expelled; theft is also punished by expulsion. Fornication merits six months suspension, and fighting two to three weeks "at home", cooling off. Witchcraft, like the carrying of juju or charms into the prayer-house, is a heinous offence which is dealt with immediately by expulsion from the congregation<sup>1</sup>. There are also a number of minor regulations relating to dress, that are meant to prevent shows of display which encourage the vices of the flesh and conceal the inner man. Wearing ear-rings, make-up and gold bangles during services distract the eyes of the men, and encourage vanity and jealousy among the poorer sisters. No member who takes the Serafim way seriously can dance except in the prayer-house: dancing the hi-life in bars leads to serious temptation.

The taboos which are applied to members are, like the rules of

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1. In theory, the elders are meant to look carefully into witchcraft accusations in order to avoid trouble between members. But once the men of God sense that they have the floor with them, the witch is driven out at once.

behaviour, designed to regulate conduct in the prayer-house. But as Serafim are supposed to behave like God's chosen children at all times, these negative proscriptions apply both inside and outside the prayer-house. The most serious taboos concern women who are potentially polluting during their menstruation. Taboos, as we saw in the previous chapter, are designed to ensure that the ritual purity of the little community is maintained (see p.131). No menstruating sister can enter the building at this time of the month. Should a woman touch her prayer-gown, consecrated water or holy oil while menstruating, the water and oil are thrown away. But she can keep the gown, provided it is re-consecrated by the angels and the prayers of the elders and men of God. All couples having had sexual intercourse before coming to the prayer-house must wash; no elder may enter the holy chancel in a corrupt state. There are further minor taboos on wearing shoes in the prayer-house, smoking and drinking alcohol or beer which the "Spirit hates" - as Serafim put it. The smoke of cigarettes or hemp and the smell of drink drive away the angels who only like clean things.

It is not easy to keep tabs on all the members who break the rules or taboos of the prayer-house. But since many of the members live in the few streets adjacent to the prayer-house<sup>1</sup>, while yet others work near each other in the market or share the same office, offences

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1. Members often move to streets near the prayer-house when they join, because it saves travelling time and enables them to see their new friends after services. There is naturally an extra sense of community between members who live near each other, attend prayers together, and who may even trade in adjacent stalls in the market.

are often reported to the men of God. When the visioner or prophet says that "the Spirit is annoyed with a certain brother who comes unwashed to the prayer-house from Ebonesie street" (a street very near the prayer-house), those who know him will quickly be able to guess who the culprit is.

### Secular Agencies of Role Control

Whereas all the elders apply informal pressure on one of their number who, for instance, takes too much authority unto himself, it is only the annointed elders who have the authority to exercise organised sanctions. In practice, however, the two Apostles and the caucus are most often involved in matters of discipline. The case of a dishonest prophet<sup>1</sup> or an adulterous sister may be discussed at the annointed elders meeting. But the Apostles and the caucus will have talked with the offender long before, in an attempt to sort the matter out discretely before all the senior elders are formally involved. Nevertheless, the annointed elders committee has to agree to any serious punishments which may be meted out as expulsion or suspension<sup>2</sup>.

To illustrate the way in which the senior elders deal with deviancy by applying organised sanctions, I give the case of prophet Oke who was dismissed for taking money for visions and alleged immorality with the sisters.

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1. In 1965 to 1966 two prophets were dismissed from the prayer-house for immoral conduct.
  2. During 1965 to 1966 one brother was suspended; and an unmarried sister was expelled for taking money from the printing press committee and for "getting belly".

Prophet Oke Is Dismissed: 1958-1959

In 1958, when the Baba Aladura of the Order came to the east for the annual ordination ceremony, he brought with him a prophet to work for the Fegge prayer-house. Oke had been a wandering prophet who had loosely associated himself with several of the Cherubim and Serafim sections during his career. Taking up his new job at Fegge, rumours began to reach the ears of the elders that Oke was taking money for visions. He was reprimanded and cautioned by the elders who also began to suspect him of immoral behaviour with the sisters. Annoyed with the continual warnings from the elders, Oke quarreled with them. He was dismissed in 1959 with the agreement of all the elders. Oke started his own prayer-house in Inland Town that year; his reputation for immorality has grown steadily in the meantime.

More usually, however, the elders have to cope with the minor irritations of friction between members who get to know one another too well. In such cases, gossip and public disapproval play a greater part in role control than the organised negative sanctions available to the annointed elders. Typical cases which come before the two Apostles and the caucus are trouble between married couples, alleged misconduct between a brother and sister, and mischief-makers who spread lies about their fellow Serafs. Generally, the Apostles or the caucus deal with the problem by consultation, allowing each party to state his view of the matter; the elders then give their opinion.

However, on other occasions the elders deal firmly with an offender, telling him bluntly what will happen if he disobeys them. This is what happened to Leader George who got into trouble in 1964.

Leader George Tries to Dismiss His "Wife": 1964

Leader George joined the prayer-house in 1963, one year after his second wife's death. He is an Inspector in the junior grade of the Ministry of Agriculture's Produce Division.

Some months after his first wife died, his mother sent him a "maid" to look after the children. Unfortunately, temptation came and the maid conceived. The elders saw that the girl was pregnant and tackled Leader George about it. They told George that if he stuck to his intention to send her away, he would be expelled from the prayer-house, because he was the unborn child's father. Reluctantly, the Leader agreed and today the girl is still with him.

That Leader George obeyed the ruling elders, and hearkened unto their threat of dismissal, shows that the elders are able to exert some constraint on the behaviour of members who are reasonably committed to the prayer-house like George was. Again, in 1966, an Aladura lent a floor member £200 to start him off in trading. One of the Apostles also lent the same brother £150. After a few months "no-one saw his trading", and the Aladura did not get his money back. But the ruling elders would not allow the Aladura to take the floor member to court, until he had been given more time to return the money. In addition to such diffuse pressures which are often effective, organised sanctions are also applied when the rules against fighting in the prayer-house, for instance, are continually flouted by certain brothers or sisters. The same holds for Serafim who show their lack of love towards one another (and therefore, by implication, towards God) by indulging in back-biting and slander.

In 1965 the lady elders dealt with a case brought to their

attention, which showed how they reacted to a situation that could have brought the anger of the Spirit down on their heads.

Sister Odi Pollutes the Prayer-House: 1965

In June, 1965 sister Odi entered the prayer-house by mistake when she had begun to menstruate. Another sister noticed her cloth and told her; sister Odi left the building at once. The lady elders were told about this accidental pollution of the prayer-house, and being pressed by the other sisters on the floor, brought the matter up at the women's monthly meeting. One of the senior lady elders, a lady leader, argued that they should forget it because it was a mistake. "It was a minor matter (which) should be kept to the sisters because it gives the elders chance" (i.e. it would give the male elders and the men of God an opportunity to inveigh against the sisters, who are often accused by visioners of polluting the prayer-house).

The taboo on pollution is one of the most serious offences, but here we have the rationalisation that because sister Odi polluted the prayer-house by accident it should not be reported to the elders or men of God. In this case, the lady elders were concerned to keep the sisters out of trouble, and handled the disapproval of other sisters by merely reprimanding sister Odi. Thus, to some extent the rules and taboos of the prayer-house can be twisted by members to suit their own convenience.

However, organised negative sanctions are not the only means available to the annointed elders for checking deviancy. The indirect threat of withdrawing a promised ordination from an insubordinate junior elder is usually sufficient to keep him on his toes. The same goes for a floor member who is aware that he is on the short list for ordination as an Aladura. For if he turns down the ordination in a huff, or is refused it by the elders, he may not get another chance next year.



Pastor Isaiah Declines Ordination: 1964-1966

In 1964 Pastor Isaiah of Inland Town prayer-house was "offered the title of Evangelist", but he turned it down saying the work was too much and that he was not ready for it yet. But by 1965 he had changed his mind. However, at that time the Fegge elders were highly displeased with Isaiah and other elders at Inland Town. When Isaiah asked for his ordination, he was told that it was not possible that year: the same happened in 1966.

In theory, as we saw in Chapter 1 (see pp.61-62), ordination is now a matter of meritorious assessment on the basis of conscientious service, good organising abilities and the like. For the most part this is how ordination works. But when an elder, however correctly he carries out his duties in the prayer-house, offends the senior elders he is unlikely to get his promised ordination for some time. Also, mobility is affected to some extent by the candidate's education, occupation and his importance as a potential ally of the elders who may be in need of loyal colleagues. Thus, ordination is a powerful weapon which the ruling elders can apply discretely to bring subordinates into line.

Nevertheless, elders like floor members and the men of God are contained by the role structure. In the last resort, the elders are dependent upon the general consensus of the prayer-house that they have a right to impose discipline. Since the prestige of their role in the prayer-house is partly influenced by the degree to which their behaviour approximates that prescribed by the norms of elderhood, the elders deal with an offending colleague as quietly as they can. If the pressure

of their criticisms do not have any effect, the technique of disavowal<sup>1</sup> comes into operation: all the elders ignore the offender. He either leaves of his own accord, or "stays at home"<sup>2</sup> for some time until feelings have calmed down. It is seldom that an elder is formally expelled, because the after-effects of expulsion are liable to create much ill-feeling on the part of elders who may sympathise with the victim<sup>3</sup>. This lays the elders open to attacks from the men of God, who keep a keen watch on the behaviour of the elders in any case. Visions are often given about "confusion among the elders", and some men of God try to deliver private messages in public during the service if they can get away with it<sup>4</sup>.

Thus, while the elders can and do exercise organised sanctions which are effective, the pressure of informal opinion among elders and

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1. This is a common device at all levels of the hierarchy. Those concerned, and it can involve all the members, put the offender into Coventry.
  2. I have no case of this technique being applied to elders during 1965 to 1966. But an Evangelist at the Enugu prayer-house was disavowed in 1965. He "stayed at home" for several months, and then made it up with the senior elders.
  3. I only have instances of expulsion for the Mt.Zion house of prayers. Seven disobedient elders were expelled in 1966; the result was to split the prayer-house from top to bottom, the ensuing confusion ending up in legal action by the two factions. This is not to say, however, that no elder has ever been expelled from the Fegge prayer-house.
  4. The elders intervene, if they can, before the visioner has gone too far, telling him to deliver it privately. Most men of God at Fegge (but not always elsewhere) refer in general terms to trouble between the elders, reserving private messages until after the service. As we saw in Chapter 2, the Fegge prayer-house is a well run; and the elders have been able (for reasons explained on page 100) to establish a routine system of administration, which can contain conflicts between elders.

floor members both precedes the application of organised sanctions and plays a larger part in the daily lives of Serafim. That the elders only use organised sanctions as a last resort, indicates the extent to which the process of maintaining conformity to role norms by secular sanctions is dependent upon a common consensus. The authority of the elders is partly dependent upon their esteem in the prayer-house and their relationship with the men of God. On the whole, the Fegge elders have managed to live up to the norms of their role, have maintained a united front when criticism comes up, and have therefore exerted the secular authority of elderhood over the charismatic influence of visioners and prophets.

#### Ritual Agencies of Role Control

Social control through ritual procedures begins with the visioners and prophets during the visioning session, when Serafim are warned of the temptations which will befall them. The same message will, however, direct the brother or sister what to do to ward off the accident, illness or death which will otherwise happen. Protection is ensured by candle prayers conducted for individual members, or categories of members as all clerks, Revival Prayers, and tours of "seven branches" when the brother on tour gives dramatic sermons on the wonders to be found in the Order. Once these prayers are seen to be giving the required protection against evil spirits, enemies or witches, the brother or sister gives thanks during the Sunday morning service. He or she is then reunited in the bosom of the congregation, which joins the member in praising God

for His deliverance by shouting seven times each, "Alelujah", "Yea", "Hosannah".

The ritual procedures for ensuring conformity to the ethical precepts and rules of the prayer-house are based on the assumption that even if members have not committed any sin or offence, outsiders at work or in the home can jealous a member, thus bringing him such temptations as illness or death. Visions, which give members fore-knowledge about such events, and the many kinds of prayers which can be conducted to fight off hostile spirits, are therefore two related procedures in the process of control by ritual agencies.

I begin this examination of the sanctions and pressures exerted by visions and prayers by considering the different kinds of prayer.

#### Ritual Agencies of Role Control: Prayer

Maintenance rituals like Victory Prayer or the Love Feast are geared to the congregation as a whole; the sins of all members are washed away, and the angels come on their horses bringing many blessings to the ritually pure prayer-house. But there also are various rituals of prayer, which are orientated around the individual needs of brothers and sisters. It is these prayers which are conducted when negative visions have been declared.

The actual process of praying is strengthened by such aids as holy water, holy oil, psalms, candles and incense. Holy words and

psalms are learnt by the initiated - the elders<sup>1</sup> - who then know the right combinations of words and psalms, which give the best protection against enemies or grant fertility. Candles throw out the light of the Spirit and attract the angels; incense drives away the evil spirits and throws open the path to God and the angels. Holy water and oil are specially consecrated by the elders with powerful prayers: illness is cured, fertility speeded on its way and evil spirits warded off, if members bathe in or drink holy water and holy oil.

After evening prayers, individual prayers for members are conducted by the elders and the men of God who also hold the role of elder. Candles are placed around the suppliant; there can be one, three, seven, fourteen or twenty-four candles. The higher the number, the greater the power of the prayer. The elders then recite the chosen prayer which will best solve the problem of the petitioner, waving their staffs of office in the air to beat off the evil spirits. However, if members are to get the best out of these prayers they must have faith in God and in the prayer. Lack of faith means that the prayer fails, because it is said with no conviction.

The point about prayer is that it is an attribute shared by elders and men of God; also any member can be picked on to pray during a service. Prayer is open to all. It seems likely that the various aids to strengthen these petitions to the Lord, the Spirit, and the

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1. This is a sore point with the elders, who are fully aware that if every Seraf could pray with strong words there would be no prayer-house. Some floor members do have copies of pamphlets on powerful psalms and words. But on the whole, these are limited to the elders.

angels have evolved to render prayer more esoteric. The essence of spiritual strength for Serafim lies in the hidden and concealed. If everyone can pray to God, then there is no sure guarantee that one's own prayer will be more effective than those of one's enemies. Thus, powerful secret formulae have been created, which give protection against the strong prayers of rivals<sup>1</sup>.

Ritual Agencies of Role Control: the Men of God

The visioners and prophet refer to themselves as the "security guard of the Order", saying that "where there is no vision, the people will perish". It is the duty of the men of God to protect Serafim against "evil temptations, the devil and witchcraft" - as they put it. Not only do the visioners supply solutions to the material problems of members, but their spiritual powers, which are modelled on the gifts of Tunolashe, legitimise and underwrite the moral values of the prayer-house.

Since the men of God are the key figures in role control, linking the organised secular sanctions of the elders with the diffuse sanctions of floor members, it may be as well at this point to consider their social and economic backgrounds. For it could be that this role, which leads to ordination, is a convenient stepping-stone for the inordinately ambitious or the under-privileged.

Of the seven prophets employed by the prayer-house during 1965 to 1966, all but one had been unemployed or engaged in irregular trading.

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1. At the time of the dispute between two senior elders in the Order during 1963 to 1965, one elder was taken into the Baba Aladura's sanctum and given a very strong "hot" prayer, which would destroy the powerful curses emanating from his rival.

Three had Standard Six, the average educational attainment for the congregation as a whole, and two were technically illiterate, although they could speak and read English. Their average age was twenty-seven, five years less than the average of thirty-two years for the prayer-house as a whole.

The significant factor appears to be that the prophets were not in regular employment, for the salaried emolument of work as a prophet offers security. But the same cannot be said of the eleven visioners who were all in salaried employment or had their own businesses during 1965 to 1966. The visioners work their way from the role of floor member, via that of man of God, to ordination as an elder. The prophets, however, have additional prestige because they are paid employees addressed as prophets: visioners are never addressed as prophet. In this way the prophets satisfy any ambitions of leadership, which they may have, more immediately than the visioners. It seems apparent that the former irregular employment of prophets points to their ambitions; and like many visioners they undoubtedly use their role as a means of achieving ordination. It takes time and much energy to maintain the daily flow of visions, which accords a brother the role of visioner; or grants a prophet the recognition due to a paid employee who is a full-time worker of the Spirit.

Ritual Agencies of Role Control: the vision, the trance and the dream

I have distinguished between three kinds of ritual sanctions: the vision, the dream and the trance. The gift of visioning, which is

the pivotal attribute of the role of man of God, is an organised sanction. Visions can be delivered publicly in the prayer-house or privately to members in their houses and work-places. Members who are not men of God, but experience the odd vision, either deliver the message during the service or tell the person whom it concerns in private. The dream and the trance can also be organised sanctions; but they only occur irregularly as they are uncontrollable. Members usually deliver such messages personally, but sometimes they give them publicly on the prayer-house floor.

Thus, visions are eminently suitable to manipulation and therefore form the charismatic gift par excellence. Dreams and trances, on the other hand, are not an integral aspect of the man of God's role because, unlike visions, they can not be controlled in any way. Dreams and trances do not form a daily part of control by ritual agencies, because the gift of having dreams and trances is not so associated with the man of God's role as visions are. Members who dream or have trances do not have the same authority as the men of God to order prayers to protect the brother or sister from temptation. In other words, the dream and the trance are not the pivotal attribute of any role.

Serafim define visions as supernatural phenomena which happen when one is awake, generally praying at home or in the prayer-house. Serafim say that those who fast "to encourage their spirit", and pray hard, will see cinema-like images before their eyes; they can be in colour or black and white. The vision may or may not be accompanied



by voices. Members can have "cool" visions, which happen without the Spirit gripping the body (i.e. possession). Then there are "hot" visions that happen when the recipient is full of the Spirit, which shakes the body, throws one onto the floor, or compels one to utter strange noises (i.e. speaking with tongues). Some Serafim regard "hot" visions as particularly powerful. But those experienced in the art of visioning value "cool" visions, which indicate that the recipient can control the Spirit. For the devil and evil spirits can work much more easily through men of God who are possessed. But when one is "cool" in spirit, there is time to assess the content of the message, and to find out whether or not evil spirits are "putting on the face of a good angel to deceive you". (This is a common expression among visioners and prophets)

The problem of "interpretation" is one which always plagues the men of God. The various techniques for deciding whether a vision is sent by the angels or evil spirits illustrate the subjectivity of charismatic powers. Visions, dreams and trances are experienced by individuals and, apart from the criterion of fulfillment, there is no fool-proof check on the reliability of a message. Many visions, particularly if they are hostile to a member, are "put into the Spirit for confirmation". The fact that some messages are dropped quietly, while yet others are twisted by the men of God to prove that their vision was valid because it was fulfilled, casts doubts among members about the authenticity of certain visions. For example, in 1965 Leader George

was informed privately by a visioner that the Spirit said he was going to murder his children. This revelation was based on the fact that, living on the same floor as George, he had heard George beating his children. George angrily told the visioner to stop, otherwise he would tell the Apostles. George, like most Serafim at Fegge, distinguishes between "true" and "false" prophets. The message he was given was false because it was obvious where the visioner's information came from. Other messages are true, both because they are seen to be fulfilled, and because they are believed to be based on spiritual revelation and not the knowledge of the mind, gained by close personal contact with members.

Dreams and trances, however, are more difficult to arrange: the main problem is one of interpreting the content correctly. Many Serafim admit that they are "doubting Toms" at times. But when a brother observes that the vision he wrote down so carefully in his "vision note book" has apparently been fulfilled with the passage of time, he is full of joy, saying "the God of this Cherubim and Serafim be too strong". Thus, Serafim at Fegge veer from an enthusiastic belief in the ability of the Holy Spirit to speak through his prophets, to cautious cynicism on other occasions. For much depends upon the man of God in question. "True" prophets are much sought after, but "false" prophets who manipulate visions are ignored and can be dismissed by the elders. The individual authority of a man of God is very much a sign of what he makes of his role.

Before examining the vision as an organised ritual sanction, I will look briefly at dreams and trances, giving an example of how these

sanctions can restate the rules and ethical precepts of the prayer-house. Dreams, which form another ritual sanction, can be stronger than the average visions if they are "deep" (i.e. recalled well, and permeated with symbols). Once "deep" dreams have been interpreted correctly, they are more often than not fulfilled. Those members who specialise in strong dreaming - elders and floor members - are respected for their talent. But usually they are dependent upon specialists in interpretation who have to be consulted. There was only one specialist in interpreting dreams in Onitsha. He was an elder at the Inland Town branch who was kept busy by Serafim from both prayer-houses.

The trance is like the vision and dream in that it gives one fore-knowledge about coming events. But trances are regarded as being more powerful than visions, because they are not open to manipulation and come so unexpectedly. Trances happen when one is dozing quietly in one's room during the day. The person having the trance is held down and cannot move until it is finished. No voices are generally heard, but one is taken thousands of miles and "shown many things by the angels".

Although dreams and trances occur irregularly, they can play an important part in checking deviancy if they are sufficiently dramatic to be taken up by the men of God or elders. The case of Sister U illustrates this point clearly.

A Witch Grips A Sister's Womb: August 1965

Sister U was lying in bed asleep one night in August, 1965, when she dreamt that three black women came to her. One of them was a witch who had a face exactly like that of a sister at the Inland Town prayer-house. This witch tried to pull the sister off the bed. U cried out "Michael, come!". St. Michael then appeared wielding his sword, and the witch went off. Later the witch returned, and pointed her finger at U's abdomen, pulling the clothes off her stomach. Sister U cried out again "Michael, come!". St. Michael came and drove the witch off.

The next day, U saw the witch at prayers, and told the prophet about it. He said, "there are many witches in this prayer-house, and this sister is one of them". U pressed her case with the annointed elders, who publicly declared to the congregation one night that a witch was preventing U from conceiving. At once, fighting broke out between two sisters on the floor and one of them broke away, fleeing the prayer-house.

This dream is significant for two reasons. The content of sister U's dream is common to Serafim, who know full well that evil spirits and witches come at night to plague them. The arch-angel Michael is always appealed to, for he is the warrior Seraf, waging God's war against all evil forces and spirits. Witches who destroy embryos, or prevent conception, are frequently invoked to explain why a sister does not conceive; just as enemies, who use medicine, are blamed for slow progress at work or illness and death. Secondly sister U's dream had an immediate impact upon relationships in the prayer-house at Inland Town. A sister who had previously been suspected of breaking the rule against witchcraft had been openly revealed by her flight, which proved to the members that she was a witch.

The Structure and Content of Visions As Organised Ritual Sanctions

The rite of visioning, which begins on the prayer-house floor when

a man of God gets up and declares "before God and man, the Spirit says...", follows a definite pattern. The structure of a number of visions given by the same man of God is one in which threats and warnings alternate with promises of blessings. On the whole, negative visions outnumber more positive messages, but this pattern is influenced by the kind of service which is being held. A specially powerful service like Victory Prayer, or the anniversary of St. Michael, stimulates visioners and prophets to proclaim first of all that various blessings as fertility, forgiveness of sins and spiritual strength have been brought by the angels to Serafim. The man of God then goes on to pronounce warnings about coming temptations which frequently arise because, as visioners say, "members are too greedy for blessings". But at an ordinary service held during the week, the men of God generally begin with negative visions, which are interspersed with the odd blessing or two. At these services, the Spirit is less in evidence among Serafim, and both members and men of God are preoccupied with their daily problems. It takes a strong service to uplift the spirit of all.

The following example of one set of visions given by the same man on April 17th, <sup>1965,</sup> at Fegge illustrates the alternating arrangement of negative and positive messages.

#### The Structure of a Set of Visions

- (1) A voice is advising us to pray for a boy child at Inland Town (prayer-house). To get protection, use three candles to pray (for it) for three days.

- (2) Since the arrival of two children (recently born), seven more will come to sisters seeking the fruit of the womb.
- (3) All our sisters seeking the fruit (of the womb) are to be prayed for by mothers for seven days. On the seventh day, elders (are) to bless the prayer and consecrate water for barren sisters. Barren sisters are to ask for forgiveness of sins and the blessing of the womb. Prayer will remove the sins of forefathers and parents preventing the fertility of sisters.
- (4) Pray for the Holy Order in ... town. Trouble and confusion are coming.
- (5) The joy of our Lord has entered us (i.e. blessings are promised).
- (6) Help our elders in prayer, and pray God to avert confusion in their midst.
- (7) A bad spirit may fight against our elders. We must pray against it. The elders staying in the Order have doubled powers.

The implications of this typical alternating arrangement are clear: the vision is a means of controlling the behaviour of Serafim, who are always kept on their toes by the warnings about forthcoming troubles. No sooner have blessings been promised to the congregation or an individual than temptations come, because "there is no permanent guarantee of protection" - as one Seraf said. Satan is continually at work, attempting to block blessings brought by the angels or using evil spirits to bring troubles to members.

The content of visions reveals the faith, doctrine and beliefs of the prayer-house. When, for instance, a man of God warns a particular sister that she has polluted the prayer-house by entering during her menstruation, he is restating a taboo which has been broken, commenting

on social behaviour, and promising punishments for this breach. Visions therefore reaffirm the values of Serafim as God's chosen ones, while stating the way in which members will be punished for their sins.

But in addition to linking the ideology of Serafim with behaviour in the prayer-house, visions also provide the men of God with opportunities to actively direct worship, and to determine the measures to be taken to protect members from the accident, death or illness that the Spirit has promised. Although the men of God are formally excluded from policy-making, they exercise much influence over the individual lives of members. They also authorise, through the Spirit, the arrangement of moveable services like candle prayers, Revival and Victory Prayers, and the Love Feast. All these services are geared towards giving protection, and to smoothing over troubles between members.

The dual function of visions in revealing the sins of the congregation and forthcoming punishments, and in acting as a vehicle through which the men of God control liturgy, is illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1      The Content of Visions Declared at Fegge between February 1965 and May 1966

<u>Content</u>	<u>To All Members</u>	<u>To Particular Members</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Warnings:</u> about death; accidents; illness through poisoning done by witches, enemies or sin; there is juju or a witch in the prayer-house; there will be bloodshed in Nigeria; thieves will come to steal; strangers will trick the prayer-house	129	82	211
<u>Moral directives:</u> about the need for good behaviour; no laziness, no sloth; not to speak ill of the elders; not to eat pig; not to smoke or drink; not to indulge in witchcraft or juju; not to quarrel with a Seraf; have a clean mind and body; love all people; behave like a Seraf when you get home; don't pollute the prayer-house	149	40	189
<u>Prayer for special categories of members:</u> those with names beginning with "H", "C" etc; those who are traders, clerks, etc; all pregnant sisters; all barren sisters; for protection against temptation, death or accidents	94		94
<u>Blessings given by the angels:</u> fertility; good health; promotion; examination passes; trading success	47	7	54
<u>Protection given by the angels:</u> against all enemies; evil spirits driven off; witches driven from the prayer-house	50		50
<u>TOTAL</u>	469	129	598



Earlier in this thesis I said that on the whole members joined the prayer-house for material reasons (see Chapter 3, pp.124-125). Once a Seraf, they look for guidance about the future, protection against enemies, sickness and death. Over sixty per cent of the visions I recorded at the Fegge prayer-house were directly negative in content. Members are punished for their sins by death and the like; they are also subject to unforeseeable and uncontrollable events which threaten their well-being. Or else strangers about whom no-one knows anything will come to the prayer-house, either carrying charms to disturb the ritual purity of the congregation, or to cause trouble after they have lulled members into thinking they are innocent of any ulterior motive. The concern of Serafim with the unknown and uncontrollable suggests four conclusions about life in Onitsha, which are ritualised through the vision.

Firstly, Serafim appear to value relations which are of some duration, so that they are based on a personal knowledge about the real intentions and character of those with whom members interact. In this way, Serafim are able to exert some control over the behaviour of others whose motives are to some extent predictable. Secondly, negative visions appear to reflect an awareness of a threatening and malevolent environment; life is one continual struggle against the hostile work of enemies, evil spirits and competitors at work or in the market. Thirdly, the relative frequency of visions concerning strangers coming to disrupt the prayer-house (seventeen), indicates that outsiders appear to threaten Serafim. A common allegation is that spies from other churches are sent to discover

their "secrets". Finally, the men of God have an important task in pointing out any witches and evil spirits who happen to be in the congregation. Strained relationships between members are ritualised, and cleansed of all hostility, when the men of God see evil spirits running away from the building in the form of a dog or cat. The expulsion of witches performs a similar function, because any divisions in the congregation are externalised: once the witch is expelled, relationships have been ritually cleansed and absolved of any tension.

The importance of negative visions which warn members about the dangers surrounding them, also expresses the visioners' interest in controlling the behaviour of Serafim by moral directives. Over thirty per cent of the visions recorded involved prohibitions to the congregation about their conduct inside and outside the prayer-house. The clearly formulated rules which state the behaviour expected of Serafs is probably one reason why members stay: their lives are supplied with sufficient guidance. Additionally, the concept of ritual purity and pollution makes it imperative for members to at least make token obedience to the rules and taboos of the prayer-house. Since members are only human, the frequent violations of these rules enable the men of God to maintain their authority over the behaviour of the congregation. Visions as these therefore give the men of God plenty of scope for formal leadership in religious matters.

Although prayer-receivers join because their illness was cured or their wife conceived a baby, blessings only form about five per cent

of all visions. There may be something in the view that blessings are not declared publicly, because Satan is always there, ready to snatch them away from the angels. However, it is more probable that guidance about the future is more important to these Serafim who are concerned to hold down their jobs or to trade successfully, than promises of fertility or happiness. There is also the point that the visioners themselves exert most of their control by negative visions which demand prayers, special services to avert temptations, and the like.

Furthermore, the content of visions indicates the alignment of roles in the prayer-house. A large proportion of visions are directed towards the congregation in general - seventy per cent - but many of these are orientated towards the brothers and sisters (i.e. the floor members in this context). It is the brothers and sisters who are accused of polluting the prayer-house, breaking the rules and taboos, quarreling and behaving like rough people who have never "put on the white of Serafim", as members say. The floor, who are without formal authority, form a convenient scapegoat for the sins of all the members. On the other hand, only twenty-three visions were declared for the elders accusing them of back-biting, fighting between themselves and setting a poor example to the prayer-house. Of course many messages are declared privately to the elders. But the relative paucity of public visions for the elders in comparison with other prayer-houses<sup>1</sup> suggests that

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1. Visioners at Inland Town frequently delivered "personal" messages for the elders in public. The services I attended at the Enugu and Port Harcourt prayer-houses were notable, after Fegge, for the information given out about the elders by visioners.

the elders at Fegge have managed to contain the revolutionary authority of the men of God. Their behaviour is relatively exemplary, and they maintain a united front so that visioners cannot exploit differences of opinion between the caucus or the annointed elders.

This point is borne out by the small proportion of visions which are delivered in public - only twenty per cent of the total recorded. The elders have done their utmost to restrain the eagerness of visioners to expose the secrets of members, on account of the disruptive effects of such revelations on relationships in the prayer-house. The total proportion of individual visions was small. But nearly seventy per cent of the negative visions against accidents, and the like, were delivered to individuals or unnamed brothers and sisters, who were put into a context which told the congregation who they were. These are, in fact, the critical visions in role control, since the organised ritual sanctions of the men of God promise dire punishments for offenders. It is probably significant that only seven out of forty-seven messages promising blessings were delivered to individual members: it is enough to give general blessings.

As the vision is the vehicle of organised ritual sanctions, it is pertinent at this point to assess the effectiveness of negative visions in controlling behaviour. This may be done by considering visions as a means of checking immoral or deviant conduct, and as a device for telling members about the accidents, illness or deaths which will plague them. Undoubtedly some Serafim do ignore the warnings of the visioners

which they know full well are intended for them: a brother who knows he is the guilty one looks self-consciously alert, acting on the assumption that apparent innocence is the best defence. But if the allegation is serious, no member will be able to hold out against the disapproval of other Serafim, the threats of the men of God and the elders: to a large extent visions are effective in controlling behaviour because gossip takes over where visions leave off.

This point is illustrated by the case of Leader Solomon.

Vision Accuses Leader Solomon of Taking Money  
for Visions: mid-1965

In May 1965 a visioner declared in the prayer-house that one man of God was taking money for visions at members' houses. The visioner said later that the message was intended for Leader Solomon. On hearing the gossip, Solomon went at once to see the Apostles and told them about the accusation. They said that they believed in his innocence, but advised him to always deliver personal messages after prayers, when members mix outside the building.

Leader Solomon acted upon this slanderous vision at once before the matter got out of hand, by ensuring that he had the support of the Apostles. For Solomon the message was really serious; a conscientious elder, Solomon enjoyed his prestige as an honest Seraf who also held the role of man of God. The significant aspect of this case is that he did not defend himself by delivering messages against the visioner who had slandered him. Instead he went to the Apostles whose support can often stop the gossip which makes visions so effective.

Visions which point out witches are particularly effective, because they rid the congregation of an unpopular member. Or else, if

the man of God smells out a stranger who is carrying juju in the prayer-house, the dramatic process of detecting the evil-minded one temporarily unites the members. Worship proceeds with renewed fervour after the men of God give such demonstrations of their power.

Brother Saul Pin-Points Juju: March 1965

On Good Friday, all the members went to worship in the Wilderness. During the visioning session brother Saul, a new prophet, declared that a man armed with juju was with them. The congregation murmured loudly. Becoming possessed of the Spirit, Saul shook all over and pointed fiercely at a strange brother, shouting that he had a ring on his finger. The man collapsed in fear, produced the ring and gave it up to Saul, who handed it to the senior Apostle. The members then stood up, as the stranger disappeared, and shouted "Alelujuah, Yea, Hosannah", seven times to praise God for this miracle.

Brother Saul's work that Good Friday was remembered for the rest of the year and gave him much prestige with Serafim, who now regarded him as a young but true prophet.

Finally, visions which provide members with some fore-knowledge about illness, death and the like are equally effective. Nearly all members take these warnings to heart, for the Spirit is capricious and one cannot guarantee protection by normal prayers. Fasting and other rituals are necessary to give protection. For instance, a message was delivered in May 1965 that one brother, Joshua, was to die. Agitated, the Apostles sent members to contact him, and to get the address of his relation in Onitsha in the event of death. Joshua then had many candle prayers to protect him. But one night the vision was fulfilled, because he "died" in the prayer-house. The senior Apostle was called and saved

Joshua from total expiry by praying over him all night. Similar messages, which are taken up at once, concern the future death or illness of children in the prayer-house. Apostle Mma's little boy was once singled out for death; but candle prayers, holy water and oil saved him.

Visions alone may be sufficient to check some offenders or to alert members to the dangers surrounding them. But what is significant is that members often react to hostile messages by telling the Apostles at once; they are then safe from further annoyance, because the Apostles warn such visioners to avoid giving false interpretations of their messages. The men of God themselves do not only rely on gossip as a source of information, and as an additional sanction which buttresses visions. On occasions, they themselves acknowledge their failure to stop a brother from say, smoking, by asking the Apostles and the caucus to intervene. Such admissions of failure usually indicate that other members do not feel sufficiently strongly about the matter to apply their most effective sanction - disassociation from the brother in question. But when the men of God involve the elders, they are also admitting that in the last resort it is the elders alone who can exercise the secular sanctions which deal with such recalcitrants.

Thus, role control is a process which centres on the men of God in the visioning session, but involves other agencies and sanctions. The men of God ritualise the diffuse sanctions of the congregation, and of the floor members in particular. They restate the norms of the

prayer-house by delivering messages from the Spirit which, on the whole, do check deviancy; and do have the desired effect of worrying Serafim about future dangers. However, it is the diffuse sanction of gossip which so often buttresses visions; and it is the organised sanctions of the elders which are applied when all else fails.

The Process of Role Control: from secular to ritual sanctions

Earlier, I said that role control takes place when non-conformity brings into operation one or more of three procedures which are designed to align behaviour with the norms of the prayer-house. These are organised and diffuse secular and ritual sanctions, maintenance rituals, and individual prayers for members who are experiencing temptation (see pp.143-144). The case of Rabbi Chukwu and his wife illustrates the way in which the various agencies of control were brought to bear on the couple.

Rabbi Chukwu Dismisses Felicia: 1964-1965

In 1963 Rabbi Chukwu married a young girl, Felicia, from his home town of Nkpologu. They had a girl child, Anna, in 1964: the Rabbi was then thirty-two years old, and Felicia was eighteen years of age. She joined the prayer-house on marrying Chukwu, who had been a member since the early 1950's.

Friction soon marked the relationship between the couple. Felicia was an independent girl who, as the Rabbi said, "wanted her own way" and did not listen to the wishes of her husband and brother in Christ. On being told about Felicia by the Rabbi, the two Apostles summoned them for the first of many meetings at the office in 1964 where they tried to sort matters out. The Apostles, who were the couple's townsmen, also visited them at home, and broached the subject with Felicia's family in Nkpologu. However, as Apostle Mmahe said "Felicia had a very hard heart and would not listen to advice at all".



By early 1965 most of the congregation knew about the trouble, siding with the Rabbi, who is very popular with the members for his good nature and generosity to the prayer-house funds. Personal messages were issued by the men of God for both the Rabbi and Felicia during evening prayers; Felicia was then seen attending three candle prayers in April with her young daughter.

By May, the couple were on such bad terms that one brother, Hezekiah, forbade his wife who had been one of Felicia's best friends in the prayer-house from seeing Felicia. He was afraid that his wife's friendship with Felicia would annoy the Rabbi, who was his patron at the time. Then in late June, in spite of the advice of the Apostles to go on trying, the Rabbi dismissed Felicia without the knowledge of the two Apostles. Chukwu did so because he knew the Apostles would tell him not to dismiss Felicia. However, Felicia was made to leave her child, Anna, with the Rabbi. She herself went home to her mother at Nkpologu.

Then Anna "began to sick", as the Rabbi said in July. Prophetess Ruth had many visions which she delivered to Chukwu personally at his house; these visions revealed that Felicia's mother was trying to poison both the Rabbi and his child. Other visions, however, revealed that the person at fault was Felicia's grandmother. The Apostles, though, were not sure that either the mother or grandmother were to blame.

Anna's illness grew worse and seven candle prayers were conducted; prophetess Ruth kept the child in the prayer-house praying over her, and washing her in holy oil. Vision then ordered that Chukwu was to conduct a Revival Prayer: this was done in July. The Rabbi preached on how God saves Serafim from temptations. But Anna died soon after in late July. In August the Rabbi was told by vision to go on a tour of seven branches to thank God for His wonderful work in protecting Chukwu from Felicia's mother's medicine. This he did, going to branches in Enugu, Abakaliki and the north of Nigeria. On returning, he gave thanks at a Sunday morning service "for the God of this Cherubim and Serafim saving him from a great temptation" (i.e. the "evil aims of Felicia", who was said by prophetess Ruth to be a "Jezebel"). For the time being Chukwu's troubles were over.

In this case, the events arising out of Rabbi Chukwu's trouble with Felicia can be viewed as falling into three phases. At the beginning, diffuse secular and organised ritual sanctions were brought to bear on

the Rabbi and Felicia up to the time Chukwu dismissed her. Then there was the ritual sanction of visions, and the protective sanction of prayer that preceded the death of their child; and finally, positive measures were taken to integrate the Rabbi back into the congregation by the seven-branch tour, and the maintenance ritual of Revival Prayer.

The first phase opened with the two Apostles trying to persuade the Rabbi to be patient with Felicia, presumably on the basis that annointed elders must set an example to the floor and have peaceful conjugal relationships. By April, 1965, Felicia was having three candle prayers, which had most likely been ordered by the men of God who had been delivering personal messages to the Rabbi and herself. At the same time the disapproval of the congregation was expressed when one brother, Hezekiah, forbade his wife to continue her friendship with Felicia.

This phase ended with Chukwu taking the matter into his own hands; disobeying the advice of the Apostles, he dismissed Felicia. Although the Rabbi acted against the wish of the Apostles in the long run, it is probable that their opinion and mediation attempts did prolong the marriage. The Rabbi's action is fairly typical of members who listen to the advice of the Apostles and caucus for some time. But finding that the trouble is unbearable, they often make their own decision, which may also be against the advice of the Spirit as revealed by the Spirit<sup>1</sup>.

The second phase revolved around the negative and positive messages

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1. In 1960 the senior Apostle, Onyechi, disregarded the word of God and married a second wife, who brought "much confusion" to his household.

of the men of God. Anna was said by prophetess Ruth to be "surrounded by evil spirits fighting her": this is a common expression among Serafim to indicate that people are plotting against one. Prayers were ordered for the sick child, holy oil was smeared over her body and a constant vigil was kept over her in the prayer-house. Thus, the organised sanctions of the visioners and prophets were supplemented by the ritual of prayer and supplication to God to protect the child: Chukwu too conducted a Revival Prayer to ensure God's protection.

With the death of Anna, the third phase began with positive measures to secure God's protection for the Rabbi, and his reintegration into the prayer-house after the temptations besetting him had been removed. The Rabbi went on a seven-branch tour: work for the Lord brings blessings and protection. Finally, Chukwu's thanksgiving to the Lord in front of the congregation confirmed that his troubles had been taken away. He was now freed from the machinations of enemies (i.e. Felicia and her mother).

In this chapter, I have tried to show how role control is a process which can involve all three categories of role holders; the elders, the men of God and the floor members. On other occasions, however, deviance is checked by the organised secular sanctions of the elders, as in the case of Leader George, or by the disapprobation of the elders and congregation, as in the case of Sister Odi. On yet other occasions, the organised ritual sanction of, for instance, a dream, which pin-points a witch, works with the support of the elders and men

of God to evict an unpopular member as happened through sister U's dream.

However, as we have seen the men of God form the pivotal link in role control. It is through the visioning session that secular sanctions, which may be both organised and diffuse, are ritualised: the visioners and prophets therefore act as the ritual intermediaries of the elders and floor members. The men of God then take action through the vision and order prayers and services, which are designed to counter-balance the forces of evil pressing on Serafim who are in one kind of trouble or another.

Although the men of God have been excluded from formal policy-making since 1959 (see p.91) their role, which is cast in a ritual mould, is one of leadership. The elders and the caucus rule the prayer-house, and have monopolised such drastic secular sanctions as suspension or dismissal. But it is the men of God who generally act to expel a witch who has been revealed by vision - with the open or tacit support of the elders and floor members. Visioners and prophets also lead the congregation, by ritualising the feelings and opinions of Serafim about their fellow elders, or brothers on the floor. The charismatic attributes of the role of man of God have been routinised: they are now subordinate to the ruling elders. Nevertheless, as we shall see in the next chapter, they are a force to be reckoned with in the prayer-house. For they exemplify one of the two norms of authority which legitimise the role structure - the charismatic gifts of the Spirit, which are modelled on those of the founding prophet Tunolashe.

## CHAPTER 5<sup>1</sup>

### Role Strain, Conflict and Leadership In The Prayer-House

From an analysis of institutionalised procedures for controlling behaviour in the prayer-house, I now turn to disputes over authority which can modify the role structure. By examining different case studies of quarrels between members, I hope to show how these disputes over the allocation of authority end in role relationships being adjusted to accommodate changing relations between role holders. The chapter concludes with an assessment of leadership and of the nature of power in the prayer-house.

In this study of disputes between Serafim I have distinguished between role strain and conflict. Strain is limited to bickerings and quarrels, which do not spread to members who are not directly involved. Conflict, on the other hand, begins in strain but eventually brings in all or a majority of the prayer-house, who identify themselves with one or other of the factions supporting the leaders of the moment. Whereas strain is essentially a matter of disputes between individual role holders,

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1. My information for this study of strain and conflict is based on the following sources: the Women's Meetings of May 30 and June 27; the Worker's Committee Meetings of April 27, May 17, May 23, June 28 and October 22 all held in 1965 at the Fegge prayer-house. I also drew on visions recorded by myself during 1965 to 1966, circulars issued by the Advisory Board during 1963 to 1965, conversations with members, and personal observation.

conflict is a collective affair in which the alignment of members may cut across established relationships. However, as Coser among others has argued, conflict is not necessarily disruptive<sup>1</sup>.

Strain may be viewed as developing out of irreconcilable role norms, or the competing interests of members in specific situations.

The principal areas of strain may be located as follows:

1. There are the leader-follower relations that emerge between Serafim on the floor. It is in these situations that brothers prepare themselves for ordination by acting as an informally appointed praying band leader, or as a spokesman for certain brothers at their meeting - the Army of Christ. Likewise, the holders of the same elder's sub-role compete to show that they are ready for promotion; and the men of God compete against one another, each visioner or prophet trying to prove that he has the most spiritual power.
2. Again, strain develops out of role norms which the holder cannot reconcile. This also applies to junior elders who are men of God as well: they have to balance the responsibilities of elderhood against their duties as God's functionaries to reveal the message of the Spirit.
3. Finally, there are the obvious strains which can develop between the three categories of role holders - the elders, men of God and floor members - because each category has different interests at stake in the prayer-house.

Although it is possible to distinguish between different areas of strain, there may of course be some overlapping in certain situations. Visioners, for instance, may be competing against one another (the first area). This process can lead to a visioner either deciding to obey

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1. See L. Coser (1956, pp.151-154) where he stresses the way in which conflict produces internal change, and distinguishes between integrative and disruptive conflict. Max Gluckman, of course, based his analysis of the "Peace In The Feud" on the complex interlocking of loyalties which can contain conflicts (M. Gluckman, 1956, pp.17-26).

the elders, who dislike seeing the men of God at odds, or maintaining his line that his spiritual revelation about a rival does not countenance any giving way to the elders (the second area).

I have chosen<sup>1</sup> three case studies to illustrate the existence of strain in the areas I have just outlined. The first examines a dispute between two floor members, one of whom also held the role of visioner; the second looks at an example of strain between the lady elders and the sisters on the floor; and the third discusses quarrels between prophets which over-flowed into another area of strain - that between the elders and the men of God. Since there was no instance of conflict at the Fegge prayer-house while I was there, I have chosen the only case available for the period 1965 to 1966: the quarrel between the Inland Town and Fegge elders, which nearly ended in the secession of the Inland Town prayer-house.

#### Role Strain in the Fegge Prayer-House

I begin with the case of two floor members, whose attempt to found a praying band on the basis of their friendship ended in the evolution of a clique within the band, and the isolation of the member who was less influential with the floor members and junior elders in the prayer-house. The action took place over a period of nine months and passed through three stages: from friendship to the emergence of a clique, and then the exclusion of the weaker member from the band.

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1. My criteria for selecting these cases are simple: they are the most extensive cases I collected of strain between these categories of role holders. Likewise, the case concerning the trouble at Inland Town was the only example of conflict while I was doing fieldwork.

There was only one area of strain: for this was a dispute between two floor members, both of whom wanted to dominate the band, which led to strained relations between the visioners in the band.

The two members who tried to win the leadership of the praying band were Joshua, a Togolese, and Hezekiah, an Ibo. Joshua joined the prayer-house at Fegge in 1963, because he wanted a cure for his stomach obstruction and an outlet for his powers of visioning. A pragmatist, Hezekiah became a Seraf in 1964 in order to heal his psychosomatic illness, and to make his barren wife fertile. A townsman of Hezekiah's took him to the prayer-house where the senior prophet, Israel, immediately visioned that Hezekiah had been poisoned by his father's brother back home, because he "jealoused" Hezekiah for his progress up to that time by driving long-distance lorries. (This was Hezekiah's expression.) Although Hezekiah's illness was temporarily cured, it recurred in 1965 when he was burdened with debts.

The Hezekiah-Joshua Praying Band of Love:  
February to September 1965

Soon after Hezekiah had joined the prayer-house he quarreled with his townsman, Mark, and took up with Joshua. Joshua, as a man of God, prayed for Hezekiah daily, issuing visions that his enemies would be put down. The two friends ate in one another's houses and "were as one", as Joshua said.

In July, 1964, Joshua suggested to Hezekiah that they should form a praying band for floor members only. At that time the most important band in the prayer-house was for elders; it was run by the senior prophet, Israel. Joshua believed that this Praying Band of Unity had many secrets, which they kept from other visioners who were not elders.



The name of the new praying band was given by vision: it was to be the Praying Band of Love because, as Joshua said, it was to work for love between men. The two floor members then approached the Apostles who gave their consent on condition that they did not "lift their shoulders above senior officers". The senior prophet's hostility to the idea was appeased when Hezekiah and Joshua offered <sup>him</sup> the post of President, but he only attended two meetings.

The process of recruitment took place through Hezekiah's contacts in the prayer-house with junior elders and floor members. At that time, Joshua only had two other friends in the prayer-house apart from Hezekiah: Evelyn, a sick girl staying there for prayers, and prophetess Ruth, a lady Aladura. But Hezekiah had already made friends with five members, three of whom were junior elders (see Chart 3, p.189). One of these elders, Aladura John, was a close associate of Rabbi Chukwu from Nkpologu. It was Rabbi Chukwu who became Hezekiah's patron in the prayer-house; he helped Hezekiah get onto good terms with the two Apostles, also from Nkpologu, <sup>who</sup> who were good friends of Rabbi Chukwu. Chart 3 also shows how Hezekiah recruited members for the Praying Band through his links with the five members he had first got to know. Joshua played no real part in recruiting members.

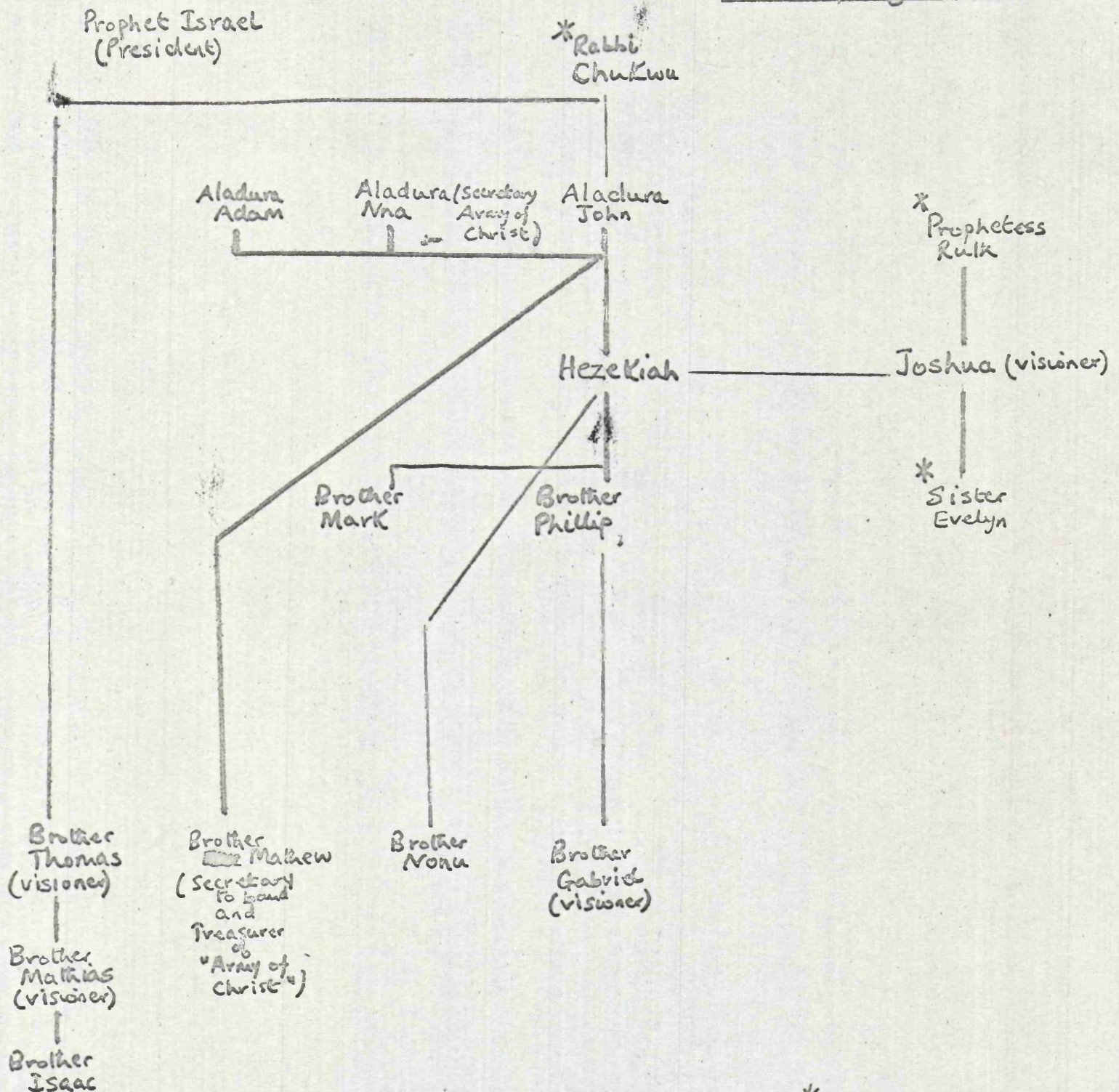
Joshua and Hezekiah invited any one of the three Aladuras to take up the position of secretary. But pleading over-work, they turned down the offer so a floor member, Mathew, got the post. Of the four visioners in the band, the most influential were Joshua and a relation of Rabbi Chukwu called Thomas.

The Band was established in February, 1965, and after the first month or two Hezekiah became very friendly with the first five members he had recruited. They gossiped in a little group outside the prayer-house after evening prayers, and ate in one another's houses. Hezekiah's wife, Esther, became friendly with the wife of Aladura John, Chinwe, who was brought into Esther's little circle of friends consisting of herself, Evelyn, Felicia (the wife of Rabbi Chukwu) and Martha, the wife of prophet Israel (see Chart 4, p.190). It was through Esther's friendship with Felicia, and his own links with Rabbi Chukwu, that Hezekiah managed to get onto good terms with the Apostles. At the same time, Esther's friendship with prophet Israel's wife ensured that he had a link with the prophet.

# Chart 3

## Hezekiah, Joshua and the Band of Love

February 1965: the process of creating links  
in the prayer-house

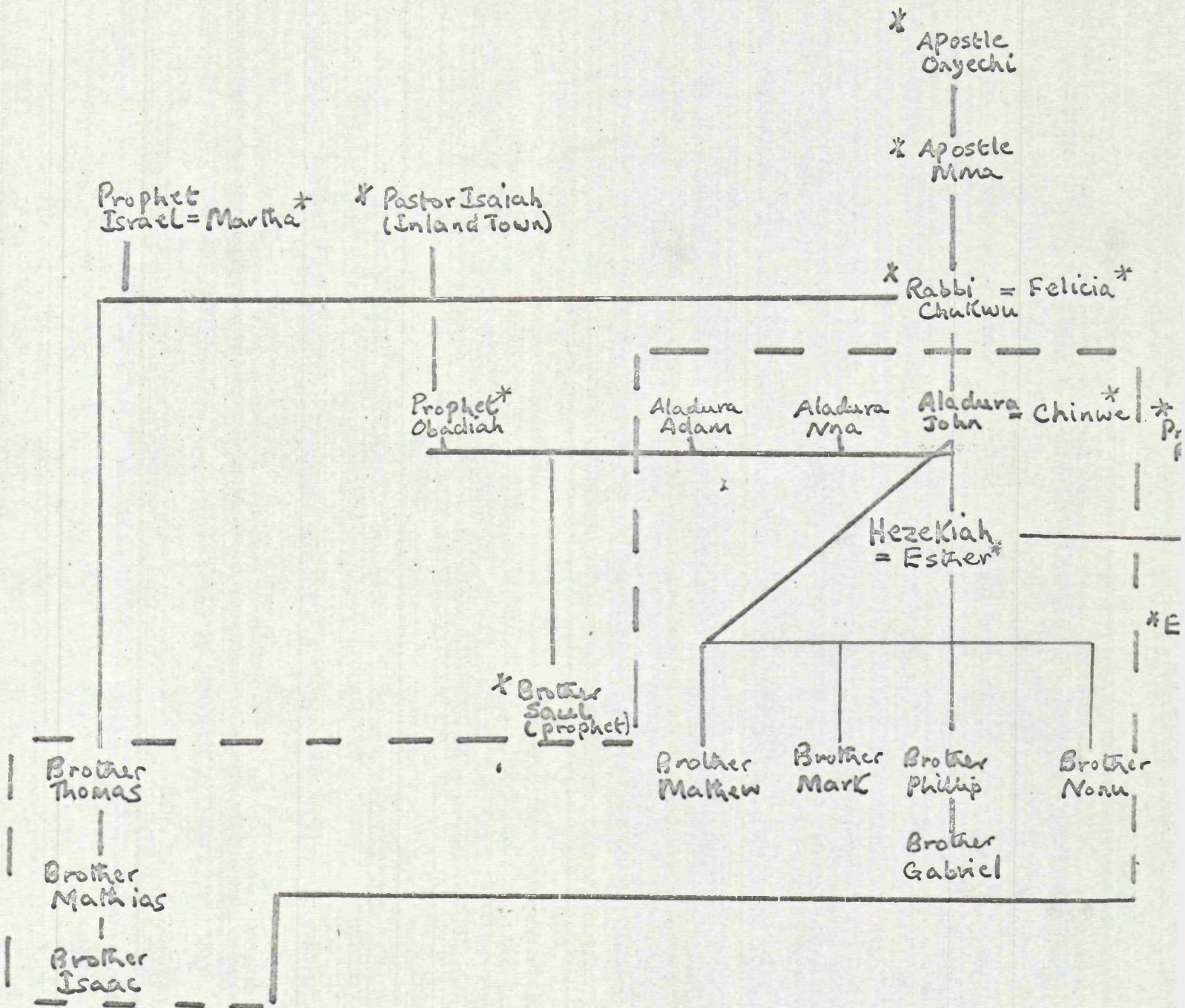


\* not a member of the Band



# Chart 4

## Hezekiah's Expanding Links in the Prayer - House by May 1965



At first everything went smoothly, Joshua saying that "they were doing like the children of one parent". For the members of the Band still remembered how in late 1964 Joshua had pointed out the exact place where a juju had been planted to poison Rabbi Chukwu.

The second phase of interaction began in about May, when visioners in the prayer-house began to declare messages which promised death for Joshua. The first of these serious messages was given by prophet Israel on May 18th; they also included revelations that Joshua had been taking money for visions conducted in his room - a serious offence in the prayer-house. By June and July Joshua had quarreled with Hezekiah during meetings held by the Band of Love. Joshua stated that all petitions for prayers and visions must be written down on pieces of paper, and collected from members before the meeting began. Joshua also challenged the three other visioners for not interpreting visions correctly, and for not behaving like responsible men of God during their meetings.

The three visioners, and particularly brother Thomas (the kinsman of Rabbi Chukwu) resisted Joshua's attempt to dictate proceedings. Hezekiah supported them and led the attack on Joshua; he was backed by all the ~~twelve~~ members of the Band, who had been recruited through Hezekiah's contacts in the prayer-house.

Joshua's position was weakened further by an incident in mid-1965, when he challenged prophet Israel, accusing him of admitting a false man of God into the weekly visioner's meeting. The elders got to hear about it and warned Joshua. One Leader said "go careful and watch out (you) do not offend people". Yet another said that the elders would soon think Joshua "was teaching them their job".

In August, relations between Joshua and the rest of the Band, who were led by Hezekiah, deteriorated to the extent that all the Band ignored Joshua completely during meetings and services in the prayer-house. Joshua stopped attending the weekly meetings of the Band of Love, and services in the prayer-house, only coming to sleep in the prayer-house at night. Impelled, nevertheless, to find an outlet for his wish to lead others in the spiritual way he began to attend prayers at a sub-branch of the Fegge prayer-house several miles out of Onitsha: there, all the members were new to the art of visioning.

The events which followed the founding of the Praying Band of Love by Joshua and Hezekiah throw light on the process of recruitment, the nature of relationships between the elders, men of God and floor members, the way in which leaders seek supporters and the impact of this quarrel on other Serafim. The main point about this case is that although the dispute between the two floor members could have resulted in the senior elders intervening, they were left alone.

Hezekiah was introduced to the prayer-house at Fegge by a townsman, Mark. But after a while he quarreled with Mark and took up with Joshua, making new friends among the floor members and junior elders. It was Hezekiah's links with Serafim who were not his townsmen that superceded his former bond with Mark. As Hezekiah got to know more members, his contacts with Aladura John led him to Rabbi Chukwu who became his patron. Hezekiah established himself with the two Apostles through his patron Rabbi Chukwu; and he got onto good terms with prophet Israel through the friendship between their two wives. Hezekiah then had links with the two most senior elders and the senior prophet in the prayer-house: he differed most significantly in this respect from Joshua, who only had two friends in the prayer-house during this time.

Although most interaction in the prayer-house takes place between members holding the same role, Hezekiah's informal links with the senior elders and the prophet show that the formal role structure is supplemented by contacts like Hezekiah's. The senior elders did not intervene in the dispute, but Hezekiah's conduct was undoubtedly influenced by the

fact that he had links with elders outside the Praying Band of Love. To some extent, Hezekiah's close friendship with Aladura John was unusual because junior elders are generally preoccupied with creating some distance between themselves and their old mates on the floor. It is only by withdrawing from intimate relations that the newly ordained can achieve the respectful recognition so necessary to them, if they are to carry out their duties of leading the congregation in worship.

The formal arrangement of roles, which is based on cleavages between the roles of elder, floor member and man of God, is further modified by the actions of certain members who hold several sub-roles. The floor member who became the secretary of the Praying Band was also the treasurer of the Army of Christ (the brothers' Meeting for floor members); and Aladura John of the Band was the secretary of the Army of Christ after June, 1965. In addition to members who hold multiple posts in the bands and meetings of the prayer-house, there are also informal links between categories of role-holders. For example, the wives of the members of the Band are also members of the Women's Meeting, which is chaired by the senior lady elders. The three Aladuras in the Praying Band sit on the junior elders committee, which meets once a month and is chaired by the senior Apostle, and attended by any annointed elders who want to hear the proceedings. It is through links like these that gossip spreads quickly and disapprobation becomes an effective sanction.

This brings us to the reasons for Joshua's defeat in the Band of

Love. Unlike Hezekiah, Joshua had no influential friends in the prayer-house, and whereas Hezekiah thought of leadership first and foremost as a matter of getting support through useful contacts<sup>1</sup>, Joshua as a lone wolf relied on the gift of seeing visions to provide him with opportunities to command others. However, although Joshua had proved that he could see powerful visions, when he pointed out the exact spot where a juju had been planted to poison Rabbi Chukwu, this was an isolated incident. In the main, Joshua's visions were symbolic with no dramatic content or dire threats of punishments coming to sinning members. The fact that he was also a sick man made him vulnerable to the other men of God, who liked delivering messages ordering Joshua to have candle prayers. As Joshua did not have the authority of a powerful man of God with the congregation, his main opponent among the men of God in the Band was able to deliver a convincing message on May 30th about his coming death.

Being without influence in the prayer-house, it was probably fairly easy for Hezekiah to organise the other ~~twelve~~ members against Joshua. The visioners, as we have seen, were particularly annoyed by Joshua's attempts to organise the proceedings; they rejected this in June and July. By August Joshua was disavowed by the Band; Hezekiah and his friends got their way by closing ranks against Joshua. Although Hezekiah and his followers found a solution to the strained relations

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1. In 1965 prophet Israel tried to seduce Hezekiah's wife. But valuing his friendly relations with the elders, who trusted Israel, Hezekiah said nothing openly about it.



between Joshua and himself by the forceful action of the Band who disowned Joshua, ritual and diffuse sanctions also played a part in pressuring Joshua. The men of God, for instance, issued negative visions about him. These had the effect of worrying the two Apostles, who were so anxious that they tried to trace Joshua's family in Togoland, in case the prayer-house would have to pay for transporting Joshua's corpse back to Togoland. Then junior elders talked to Joshua, telling him to "go carefully", otherwise he would offend the senior elders if he made a habit of challenging the senior prophet in the prayer-house.

The quarrel between Joshua and Hezekiah involved thirteen Serafim directly. Although other members knew about the trouble, including the senior prophet and the Apostles, they did nothing openly to intervene. The explanation for the inactivity of the elders lies in Joshua's low standing in the prayer-house; he was also friendless and vulnerable on account of his serious illness. The dispute was therefore limited in effect to the members of the Band, who solved it in their own way. The one-sided nature of the quarrel also explains why it had no repercussions on other relationships in the prayer-house. Since members thought Joshua was an odd but rather pathetic figure, there was no need for anyone other than the Band to take the matter seriously.

In spite of the fact that the quarrel had no impact on other Serafim, Hezekiah became even closer to Aladura John after the Band had expelled Joshua. John took Hezekiah to work on his Honda and lent him money. But this intimate relationship ended with Hezekiah wrongly



accusing John of trying to seduce his wife, Esther. Hezekiah left the prayer-house some weeks afterwards because the members thoroughly disapproved of his behaviour.

The Lady Elders and the Ritual of "Coming Out":  
circa April to July 1965

This case concerns the lady elders and their sisters on the floor. Annoyed with sisters who were not abiding by the rule that all sisters must belong to the Women's Meeting, the lady elders acted to deal with the situation.

Of the forty elders in the prayer-house, ten are women who lead their fifty sisters on the floor; five of the lady elders come from Nkpologu village-group. However, the little clique of six lady elders is not based so much on common local origins, as on residence in the same locality and long experience of life together in the prayer-house. The lady elders, who are excluded from policy-making, are particularly careful about the behaviour of the sisters. The sisters are a favourite target of the men of God, who accuse them of pollution when the Spirit keeps away from the prayer-house. The women Serafim are, in fact, hemmed in by their inferior position in the prayer-house which is determined by their sex. The lady elders therefore guard their few privileges jealously. Many sisters often express the wish to form a sub-band of Mary or Esther, but nothing comes of it, because they fear that, as two sisters said, "the lady elders will bull them" for acting out of place. Gossip by the lady elders can also ruin a sister's life in the prayer-house,

because as they are nearly all married, they cannot move away unless their husbands agree to work elsewhere.

The ritual of "coming out" is held forty days after a woman has given birth to a boy child, and eighty days after she has born a girl (Leviticus, xii 1-8). The return of a woman into the prayer-house is an occasion of joy for all, and the newly delivered woman gives thanks for her safe delivery, rejoicing that she is now ritually clean. When a sister comes out, she is escorted by lady elders and friends to the foot of the chancel where she gives thanks, and places offerings into the silver collection plate which graces such special occasions.

For some months before the lady elders took action against their sisters on the floor in June, they had been complaining that many women had not paid their subscription to the Women's Meeting. Sisters were also failing to turn up for their weekly turn at cleaning the prayer-house.

Sometime in June, the lady elders' clique decided to penalise sisters who did not pay their subscriptions by not escorting them to give thanks for a safe delivery. The first time this decision was applied, early in July, a sister came out with no lady elder to support her. The congregation was considerably surprised, and the brothers deduced that the "sisters were divided", as one lady elder said.

The senior lady elder was then summoned to explain the matter to the worker's committee meeting on June 28th, 1965. She said that the lady elders were annoyed with the sisters, who expected to be escorted at their coming-out, but at the same time they would not pay their dues to the Women's Meeting or come to clean the prayer-house. The senior lady elder then said that they had decided to have two separate meetings for the women - one for the elders, and one for the sisters on the floor. She justified this proposal by saying that if the sisters did not like it, they would work hard "to try for the title" (i.e. ordination).

The male elders then agreed to this suggestion, murmuring under their breaths "these sisters".

The way in which the lady elders took action against the disobedient sisters on the floor showed that they were fully conscious of their rights as elders. But at the same time, they could not act effectively without the support of the male elders.

The lady elders took this matter seriously, because the sisters were failing to accord their elders with the respect and obedience owed to women who were older<sup>1</sup>, and who had the right to exercise authority over them. As the senior lady elder said: "the sisters ignore us as if we don't teach them well".

The trouble between the lady elders and the sisters influenced the relationship between the two categories of role holders. For once the lady elders had the agreement of their brothers, they imposed measures designed to bring the conduct of the sister back into line with that expected of them as floor members. A rota of cleaning groups was pinned up in the prayer-house; each group was put in the charge of a lady elder, who saw that all the women did their job on the appointed day. The lady elders also tightened up attendance at the Women's Wednesday Prayers<sup>2</sup>. But although nearly all the sisters paid their dues to the Women's Meeting, the idea of two separate meetings was not carried out. The new discipline in other respects was presumably sufficient to bring the sisters into line.

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1. The average age of the lady elders in 1965-1966 was thirty-two years; the sisters' average age was twenty-six years.
  2. Women's Wednesday Prayers is a special morning service for women, which is supposed to be particularly effective for granting fertility.

Thus, the strained relations between the lady elders and sisters on the floor was accommodated by the united decision of the lady elders to supervise the sisters more closely. Their authority to do so was partly dependent upon the male elders, but the lady elders nevertheless acted fairly quickly to quell the sisters before the men of God could get to work. The situation was therefore one in which the lady elders applied their will with the tacit sanction of the male elders' support. Organised ritual sanctions did not appear to play any part in the process of controlling the disobedient sisters.

Prophet Israel Quarrels with Prophets Obadiah  
and David: 1964-1966

As I have mentioned before, prophet Israel is the senior prophet in the Fegge prayer-house. Between 1964 and 1966 two new prophets appeared to be challenging his status with the members. "A jealous prophet", as members used to say, this case traces the way in which Israel reacted to the popularity of two new prophets: interaction extended over two areas of strain. First of all, there was the problem of Israel's evident hostility to his colleagues, Obadiah and David (the first area of strain, see p.185). Secondly, the two new prophets had to decide whether to expose Israel's machinations in the visioning session, or to abide by their duty as junior elders to obey their seniors who supported Israel in the main (the second area of strain, see p.185).

In 1964, prophet David was sent to Fegge by the regional headquarters at Enugu. Although David was to work for the Fegge prayer-house, he was a "conference" worker, paid by the headquarters at Enugu. A young man, and then an Aladura, David's

good looks and gaiety soon gathered many brothers and sisters to him. Sisters crowded his room day after day seeking prayers which were believed to be particularly strong; David's visions were soon observed to be fulfilled very precisely. Although the sisters flocked to David, their husbands were not so pleased as David's behaviour made them suspicious.

The senior elders reprimanded David for his careless conduct, which aroused unnecessary suspicions. They transferred him to the Inland Town prayer-house where the same thing happened. But members now came from Fegge to hear David's visions and receive his prayers. Prophet Israel then started a rumour that David had seduced the sick Evelyn in his, Israel's, room. Believing him, the caucus transferred David to the new branch at Warri in the mid-west. Disliking the quiet life there, David returned uninvited to Fegge to face further trouble.

Prophet Israel persuaded the elders that David was not only immoral but disobedient, so they refused to speak to David at all. Ignored by the senior elders, David endured the situation for two months; giving up, he returned to the Enugu prayer-house where he was sympathetically received.

After this event, another new prophet, a Leader, arrived at the Fegge prayer-house in early 1965. Prophet Obadiah was a recruit from Ita Balogun and a mighty visioner, also endowed with good looks and the ability to produce dramatic self-fulfilling visions. Unlike David, Obadiah's morals were never questioned. Once again, the same pattern of events developed with members flocking to see the new prophet at Fegge. Galled, Israel got the elders to transfer Obadiah to Inland Town in March, 1965, where "he could do good work" away from the senior prophet. But on observing that Obadiah was highly successful and attracting many petitioners from the Fegge prayer-house, Israel started to deliver visions that Obadiah was to be poisoned by members at Inland Town (delivered on May 17, 1965). This was followed up by visions that Obadiah was to be killed by witches (delivered on May 23, 1965).

Israel's visions nearly came to pass for Obadiah fell seriously ill in July. But his charismatic powers were proved many times over to the members, because he recovered without the aid of any western medicine.

However, the struggle between the Fegge and Inland Town elders that was going on at that time, and in which Obadiah was a central figure, led to his resignation in October. For on being ordered to go to another branch in the bush, Obadiah refused. As the elders would not change their minds, Obadiah gave in and resigned, and took up a job in another town.

The quarrels between Israel and the two prophets were mainly due to their competition as men of God for the most influence in the prayer-house (the first area of strain, p.185). But the trouble among the prophets also affected the relationships between the prophets and the elders (the third area of strain, p.185). It was not only, however, that the prophets who appeared to challenge Israel came up against the will of the elders. They also had to decide whether or not to exercise their charismatic authority and speak out against Israel, denouncing him by vision (the second area of strain). Regarding the competition between the men of God, observant Serafim had noticed that if one prophet knew something about a man asking for prayers, he would not tell the other for fear of giving his rival an advantage in declaring impressive visions. Unlike Israel, Obadiah and David were young, good looking and endowed with attractive personalities. Bringing these natural assets to their role as charismatic figures, the two new prophets had a certain advantage over the ugly and semi-literate Israel.

However, unlike Israel, David and Obadiah did not have the ear of the caucus who trusted Israel, and valued his services as a good recruiter of new prayer-receivers. In spite of well founded rumours that Israel sometimes discretely received gifts and money for visions, the elders did not suspend or expel him as they should have done according to the rules of the Order. Nevertheless, that the elders recognised the popular appeal of David and Obadiah is indicated by the fact that they did not exert any organised sanction like expulsion. Instead, the

elders imposed the diffuse sanction of disavowal on David, and ordered Obadiah to go to a bush prayer-house which they knew he would object to intensely. But in the same period (between 1965 and 1966), the elders dismissed two prophets for immoral behaviour: these men of God were less popular and did not have either David's or Obadiah's following with the floor members. Thus, the ability of the elders to impose organised sanctions would appear to be influenced by the influence of the prophets they wish to discipline.

Israel's entrenched position with the caucus undoubtedly had something to do with David's and Obadiah's failure to issue threatening visions against Israel. Should they have done so, they would have seriously annoyed the elders. But prophet Israel did not hesitate to apply organised ritual sanctions by visioning against Obadiah. Such visions are recognised by Serafim to be discrete hints that the brother or sister who is to die, or to fall ill, has committed some offence or other. Thus, while Israel was able to deliver negative visions, without offending the ruling elders, Obadiah and David did not do so: presumably because their charismatic duty to reveal all things was tempered by a realistic assessment of Israel's ability to get the ear of the caucus.

Israel's influence with the elders is an indication that the outcome of the competition between the prophets was affected by the authority of the elders. To defeat a rival, a prophet at Fegge needs the aid of the senior elders. Israel retained his position as the senior prophet at Fegge because he acted on the basis that it is the

elders who rule the prayer-house, while the men of God, who lead the congregation in religious matters, can only exert an indirect influence on the elders.

The disputes between the men of God had some influence upon the role structure. The elders at Fegge tightened up the procedures for supervising the work of prophets. All prophets were now to be transferred after two or three weeks in one prayer-house, before they could stir up any trouble. Prophets also had to report to the elders every week when they came into Onitsha from their station. As we shall see in the following case, a member of the Fegge caucus was sent to Inland Town to keep a careful eye on the disobedient elders there. Prophet Israel also spent some time there, "teaching" the elders and members about the Order.

Obadiah left the Inland Town prayer-house, but the strained relations between the Fegge and Inland Town elders still continued, though at a less intense level. Members went to see Obadiah at his new home in the town over the river, and talked admiringly of his strong powers as a prophet. The ill-feeling which the Fegge elders' treatment of David caused at the Enugu prayer-house merely exacerbated the already difficult relations between Enugu and Fegge. Relations between the Enugu and Fegge prayer-houses had begun to deteriorate in 1963, when the Fegge prayer-house sided with Chancellor Otubu in his fight against Senior Apostle Coker, a Yoruba. Coker was supported by the Yoruba elders at Enugu. Relationships between the elders, floor members and



men of God at Fegge were relatively unaffected. But the quarrel between Israel and his challengers had some after effects upon relations between Fegge and Inland Town, and between the Fegge and the Enugu prayer-houses.

#### Role Conflict and Leadership in the Inland Town and Fegge Prayer-Houses

A sub-branch of Fegge, the Inland Town prayer-house was founded in 1963: in 1965 to 1966 there were about seventy-five members. As a sub-branch, the Inland Town elders have to attend the elders' committee meetings at Fegge; they are also obliged to carry out the policies of the Fegge prayer-house. Whereas over half of the elders in my sample at the founding prayer-house were traders, all the Inland Town elders were white-collar workers<sup>1</sup> who thought themselves one cut above the Fegge elders. The occupational differences between the two prayer-houses created a certain amount of friction, which was exacerbated by the usual difficulties that arise when a junior prayer-house wishes to assert its independence of action.

In 1965 there were eight elders at Inland Town: two Pastors, a Rabbi, three Leaders and two Aladuras. It was, however, the Pastors and the three Leaders who played a leading part in the dispute with

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1. Several of the white-collar members at Fegge were transferred to Inland Town in 1963 to organise the new branch. They included a Pastor, one Rabbi and several junior elders; all worked under the Apostle who was put in charge of the new branch. He was an accountant then working in Onitsha. The early social composition of the prayer-house had a snowball effect. For new recruits were either brought into the fold by fellow office-workers, or if they joined at Fegge they came to Inland Town on hearing of the more congenial and educated members there.

the Fegge elders. After the Apostle in charge left Onitsha in late 1964 for a new job elsewhere Isaiah, who was the most senior of the two Pastors, was recognised to be formally in charge of the prayer-house. The other principal actors were Pastor Luke, Leaders Ada, Ibekwe and Ude.

Prophet Obadiah and Pastor Luke Challenge the  
ruling elders at Fegge: March-October 1965

After 1964, when the Apostle in charge left the Inland Town prayer-house, Pastor Isaiah was supposed to be in charge of the prayer-house. But although Isaiah had the gift of praying powerfully, he was no administrator. Popular with the floor members who sought his prayers, he was unable to take a decision and stick to it. Pastor Luke and the three Leaders proceeded to take the initiative, and organised the affairs of the little congregation.

When prophet Obadiah arrived in March to work at the prayer-house, he initially took a dim view of the quarreling elders, visioning on April 17th (for instance) that they should beware the Spirit's anger. At the same time, other visioners on the floor declared messages which affirmed the authority of the senior Apostle and elders at Fegge. By May the news about the quarrel between Pastor Isaiah and his opponents - Pastor Luke, and Leaders Ada, Ibekwe and Ude - had reached the ears of the visioners at Fegge. They began to declare messages in May at Fegge that the Inland Town elders must love one another like true Serafim (May 19th, 1965).

Around May, prophet Obadiah began to side with Pastor Luke. It became apparent to even outsiders like prophet Oke, who now had his own church in Inland Town (see p.153), that Obadiah was to found "his own petty church".

The next development took place when two elders fought in the prayer-house on the third day of a three days Victory Prayer. According to an observer, one of the elders said that the prayer was not to begin until all eight elders were present. Annoyed, another elder disputed this order and fighting broke out, with brothers in the congregation fighting with their wives. News of this event reached the Apostles at Fegge, who ordered the Inland Town prayer-house to close as from May 10th for seven days prayer to reconsecrate it. On the seventh day, a Love Feast was to be held to reunite all Inland Town members with one another in the brotherhood of Christ.

After the fight in the prayer-house the visioners issued messages, which declared that a juju had been found under the prayer-house so that it had had to close for seven days. And on May 17th, prophet Israel sent a vision all the way from Nkpologu prayer-house which revealed that members were trying to poison Obadiah. This message was followed by another from prophet Israel on May 23rd that a witch was going to take Obadiah's life.

The Love Feast was held on May 17th, but Pastor Luke and prophet Obadiah questioned the way in which the Feast was arranged. For the Fegge elders insisted on consecrating the water and bread, carrying them from Fegge to Inland Town. The elders there had no part in organising the Love Feast.

After the Love Feast, Pastor Luke began to actively pressure members to think in terms of more independence for Inland Town. Luke and Obadiah organised a following which included the other three elders, who had not been actively involved until then, and the most influential visioners on the floor. Pastor Isaiah remained neutral, fearing more trouble for which he would be blamed by the Fegge elders. As it turned out, his request for ordination as an Evangelist in September was rejected on account of his failure to administer the prayer-house with a firm hand.

Declaring their opposition to undue interference from Fegge, Pastor Luke and his faction told the elders in June that they would break away. Fegge then summoned a secret meeting of all the elders from the two prayer-houses at which Inland Town was to explain its behaviour. This meeting was held on June 28th after they had been publicly denounced at a junior elders meeting held the same day as "bad" elders, who were unfit to rule, and as "strangers" who had disobeyed the founding prayer-house. It was also pointed out by the senior Apostle that Inland Town was not even financially viable, because it was being subsidised by the Fegge prayer-house. Tithes had dropped from £60 a month in late 1964 to a mere £19 in mid-1965, in spite of the increased membership.

After the secret meeting, Leaders Ada and Ibekwe deserted Luke, Obadiah and Ude. Then in July prophet Obadiah's promised illness happened. But he recovered without the aid of western medicine to the gratification of the congregation, who interpreted this as a sign of Obadiah's great powers. Obadiah, who was seen by the members to be full of renewed spiritual power, worked again with Luke and Ude to establish the principle that Inland Town was to have more independence from the Fegge prayer-house. But Leaders Ada and Ibekwe remained on the side-lines, refusing to commit themselves.

In August the Fegge elders took the initiative and sent an Evangelist (an Nkpologu man and a member of the caucus) to live there: he was to supervise services and keep a careful eye on Luke and Obadiah. As these two elders, Ude and their supporters still continued to make trouble, the caucus ordered the immediate transfer of Obadiah in October to a bush prayer-house. At a secret session of the annointed elders at Fegge held on October 22, it was decided to send prophet Israel to Inland Town. At the same time, a seven days Victory Prayer was to be held at Fegge for both prayer-houses.

After Obadiah resigned as a prophet in October, Pastor Luke and Leader Ude gave way to the Fegge elders. They then began to actively petition Fegge for £300 to build an extension to the Inland Town prayer-house. However, this was not granted until mid-1966, when the elders there had proven that they were not the "empty vessels" the senior Apostle said they were.

The quarrel between the Fegge and Inland Town elders was marked by three critical turning points: the arrival of Obadiah, the Love Feast, and the secret meeting of June 28th, which resulted in two of the leading elders at Inland Town withdrawing their support from Pastor Luke. After prophet Obadiah began to work at Inland Town the friction between Pastors Isaiah and Luke, which arose out of Isaiah's inability to exert his authority over Luke and the three Leaders, was manipulated by Obadiah to organise the elders into expressing their feelings of discontent more openly. The tactless manner in which the Fegge elders handled the Love Feast gave Luke and Obadiah the opportunity to gather support with the congregation. Getting the visioners into line - all young men - the three other elders who had so far not been actively involved followed Luke and Obadiah. After they had informed the elders at Fegge that they were going to secede, the third turning point came when Leaders Ada and Ibekwe deserted Pastor Luke. In spite of Obadiah's renewed

charismatic appeal after his illness, the elders behind Pastor Luke were quelled by the firm action of the ruling elders who sent one of the caucus to Inland Town in August. And in October they transferred Obadiah to a bush prayer-house.

Thus, the strained relations between the two prayer-houses developed into conflict when Luke and prophet Obadiah actively organised a following at Inland Town. A small congregation, the members were very self-conscious about the virtues of their prayer-house, which they compared favourably with the larger and more staid prayer-house at Fegge. Although the Inland Town elders were junior in rank to the ruling elders at Fegge, they regarded themselves as superior on account of their status in Onitsha as professional men or white-collar workers. Eager to exercise their supposedly superior organising abilities men like Pastor Luke, who was the branch manager of a big transport firm in Onitsha, intensely resented their subordination to the "bush" elders at Fegge - as they put it. Since none of the elders at Inland Town were men of God, the coming of prophet Obadiah gave an extra impetus to their feelings of discontent. The most literate and cultured of the prophets at Fegge, Obadiah fitted in well with the sub-elite backgrounds of the Inland Town members (see Chapter 2, p.103, footnote 1). To them he compared unfavourably with the semi-literate prophet, Israel, who was uncouth in his ways.

However, Obadiah failed the Inland Town elders to some extent. For although he may have delivered private messages to Pastor Luke and their followers about the Fegge elders, he did not do so in front of the

congregation. His messages were limited to indirect hints about confusion among Serafim. The reason for this may be that, like all prophets, he wanted to be popular with everyone, and that he feared prophet Israel's influence with the caucus. It was, infact, Pastor Luke and Leader Ude who tried to divide the annointed elders at Fegge by accusing Rabbi Chukwu and Apostle Mma of being insubordinate to the senior Apostle, Onyechi. They said that: "the most elder Onyechi (is being) pushed down by Mma and Chukwu", over the matter of whether or not the prayer-house should buy land to build a cathedral church. But neither Apostle Mma nor Onyechi reacted to this challenge.

Although Obadiah and Luke succeeded in organising a following at Inland Town, they failed to convert any of the Fegge elders. Proud of their prayer-house as the founding branch, and resentful of the confusion brought about by the ambitious Inland Town elders, the senior Serafim at Fegge solidly supported their Apostles; and so did the men of God. Three factors probably convinced the Inland Town elders that they would make a mistake if they seceeded. As office-workers tied to a regular working day, none had the time to organise a new church; and the branch was also being subsidised by Fegge. Furthermore, having gone through the national crisis in the Order of 1963 to 1965, no-one wanted to jeopardise the privileged position of the Onitsha prayer-houses with Chancellor Otubu and the Advisory Board, which they had gained by organising support in the east for Otubu against Senior Apostle Coker of the Enugu prayer-house.

Not being fully convinced about their cause, the united stand of the Fegge elders resulted in the rebellious Inland Town elders being brought into line. Apart from the organised ritual sanctions which had been applied by prophet Israel in particular during the dispute, the caucus imposed secular sanctions to ensure that the Inland Town affair would not recur. As we saw previously in connection with the quarreling prophets, the ignoble departure of Obadiah was followed by strict measures to ensure that prophets moved around the branches, and to keep them under the regular supervision of the Fegge prayer-house. Prophet Israel was sent to work at Inland Town, and all the elders there were to attend the committee meetings at Fegge. The whole congregation was also to attend Sunday services at Fegge once a month: these measures were all carried out.

The Fegge elders brought the state of conflict between themselves and Inland Town to an end by first of all detaching Leaders Ibekwe and Ada from Luke's following in June. And then, by uniting behind their Apostles, the elders and men of God enabled them to exert their authority over Inland Town. The ruling elders initially imposed their will over their disobedient brothers by maintaining control over the situation: it was after the troublesome Obadiah had left that new sanctions were applied to prevent similar incidents occurring in future.

As the Inland Town elders were keen to get on with extending the building, they obeyed the senior elders at Fegge. The situation further improved in December 1965 when Pastor Luke was transferred to

Ibadan. However, friction developed again in mid-1966 over the purchase of costly mosaic stones to decorate the chancel: the caucus refused to pay so much for a prayer-house which was still not financially solvent. Relations became much warmer after the ordinations of September 1966. Acting on the assumption that Inland Town would be more co-operative if they were well integrated into the grade of annointed elders Leaders Ude, Ibekwe and Ada were all ordained Rabbis. Pastor Isaiah, however, was not ordained: a rather reserved man of a pacific disposition, the Fegge elders had nothing to fear from him. This tactical move had the desired effect, and at Christmas 1966 all was well at Inland Town: the leading elders there now shared in the process of decision-making at the annointed elders meeting.

#### Leadership in the Prayer-House

In the preceding discussion I have tried to show how competing interests, which lead to strained relations between Serafim, are accommodated by the role structure. The cases of the Praying Band of Love, the lady elders and the quarreling prophets illustrated the way in which strain is a matter of action between individuals. The conflict between the Inland Town and Fegge prayer-houses, however, developed out of strained relations when Pastor Luke and prophet Obadiah organised the discontented Serafim at Inland Town into a following. Interaction between the two prayer-houses from mid-May until October was based on groupings. The Inland Town elders and their followers declared their opposition to the control exercised by the ruling elders at Fegge. They



therefore questioned the legitimacy of the hierarchical allocation of authority, and the right of the senior elders to expect the obedience of their juniors. On the other hand, Joshua and Hezekiah conducted their dispute within the framework of the role structure. Hezekiah in particular took great care to cultivate the senior Apostle and prophet Israel, who respectively represented the authority of elderhood and that of the charismatic men of God.

One of the main features of the conflict between the two prayer-houses is the way in which the cleavages between the elders, men of God and floor members were over-ridden during the dispute. From mid-May until late June, the congregation at Inland Town was united behind Pastor Luke and prophet Obadiah (after late June, two of the Leaders withdrew from being actively involved with Luke, Obadiah and Ude). The Inland Town prayer-house was effectively led by Pastor Luke, Leaders Ibekwe and Ada, and prophet Obadiah who was also a Leader at the time. The senior Pastor, Isaiah, who had previously been struggling against the assertiveness of Luke and Ibekwe then withdrew from any pretence to leadership, and concerned himself with spiritual matters. The Rabbi, who was senior to the Leaders, joined Luke between May and late June, but was not accused by the Fegge elders after June of associating himself with the disobedient elders. The point is that once the established ranking of roles was in practice abandoned, institutionalised procedures for solving disputes probably became less effective. Elders who either quarrel between themselves, or reject the authority of their seniors,

do not carry much weight with their juniors and the floor members.

For in such situations, authority is reduced to the personal influence of individual leaders whose right to even direct the order of worship is questioned, because there are no formal guidelines to fall back on<sup>1</sup>.

As we have seen, an important feature of the role structure is the existence of established outlets for personal ill-feeling or disapproval about the immoral behaviour of a Seraf. The men of God supply an established safety-valve which controls behaviour through the visioning session: visions can express popular approval or disapproval of the elders, another man of God, or the behaviour of a member. The visioner not only issues ritual sanctions which are designed to constrain deviant conduct. He also ritualises ill-will between Serafim by visioning, for example, that a certain member is a witch. That person is then cast out of the prayer-house; the cause of any bad feeling has been removed in a way which has minimal repercussions on relationships between members. A possible explanation for this ritual scapegoating lies in the fact that life in the prayer-house involves close contacts between members which are carried on after services in the prayer-house compound, or at home by visiting one another. Close friendships are formed, but members also have to associate with people they may dislike or whom they

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1. This of course was true of the early relations between the members of Tunolashe's Praying Band of Serafim. As I argued in Chapter 1, customary criteria of authority were all important in the evolution of a system of relationships between Serafim at Mt. Zion, Lagos. An important event in the conflict between the Inland Town and Fegge prayer-houses was, of course, the quarrel between two elders in early May which led to fighting on the prayer-house floor.

have formed a grudge against. The only solution, apart from voluntarily leaving the prayer-house, is to accuse a member of witchcraft through the medium of visions sanctified by the authority of the Spirit.

Informal relations between different categories of role holders also contain disputes by modifying the structural cleavages between the men of God, the elders and floor members. Hezekiah, for instance, established links with elders and the men of God which cut across his relations with other floor members like himself. Again, two members of the Praying Band of Love held sub-roles in some of the prayer-house's societies; and the wives of all the brothers in the Band associated formally once a month with the lady elders in the Women's Meeting. Although disputes between members holding the same role as that of floor member may become hotly contested, the direction of events is influenced to some extent by any relations which the protagonists may have with elders and the men of God.

In Chapter 4, I examined the process of role control with reference to the imposition by the elders and men of God of secular and ritual sanctions, which constrain deviancy. There, we saw how role norms were effectively related to behaviour in the visioning session. The preceding analysis of strain and conflict was intended to bring out the way in which the ability of the elders to impose effective sanctions is determined by their power to control dissident Serafim. At Fegge, the visions delivered by the men of God refer to the behaviour of individual members or the elders. But these visions do not offer a

direct political challenge to the authority of the elders. When members act upon the directives of the Spirit, they do so either because they fear public opinion, or because they accept the charismatic authority of the visioners and prophets; the elders too are indirectly constrained by messages from the Spirit. But in the last analysis, it is the elders who exercise power by acting collectively in political situations. The senior elders' ability to do so is furthered by their monopoly of committee work. As I mentioned earlier, a few ruling elders hold several sub-roles on the sub-committees (see p.112). Associating closely with each other in different situations, the intimate informal relations between the ruling elders have enabled them to control all avenues to formal leadership among the elders. They are backed up by men of God like prophet Israel who thus add the authority of spiritual revelation to the elders' power to impose their will over challengers.

Thus, the basic premise of role control in the prayer-house is that the elders have contained the charisma of the men of God<sup>1</sup>. The extent to which the authority of the elders is based upon their power to act decisively came out in the dispute with Inland Town, when prophet Obadiah did not venture to ritualise the ambitions of Pastor Luke and the congregation.

Nevertheless, as I have tried to show, the role structure of the prayer-house does not exist in a timeless vacuum. On the contrary,

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1. As I pointed out earlier, this is not so true of other branches in the more cosmopolitan and politically orientated towns of Enugu, Aba and Port Harcourt (see Chapter 2, p.100).

competition between members has the effect of introducing adjustments in the ordering of relationships, which accommodate new situations in the prayer-house. Of the cases I have considered, only the dispute between Hezekiah and Joshua had no formal impact upon the role structure. The strained relations between the lady elders and the sisters and between the prophets, as well as the conflict between the two prayer-houses resulted in new regulations. The new rules were designed to align behaviour with the Serafim norm of obedience to those who are senior in the role hierarchy. That the prayer-house has reached the present system in which strain results in minor adjustments to the structure and not in disintegrative conflict<sup>1</sup> is, as I argued in Chapter 2, due to the way in which the ruling elders have used their bonds of long experience together, and of common local origin, to mould the formal arrangement of roles according to their own conception of government and authority. Thus, leadership in the Fegge prayer-house is a process which takes place first of all within the context of the power of the elders to assert their authority.

However, the course of interaction between competing members is also influenced by the existence of established institutions through which Serafs express their disapproval about others. And lastly,

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1. During 1963 to 1965, the quarrel between Otubu and Coker ended in the secession of Coker from the Order. At one time it looked as if Coker would take the whole eastern Conference with him. But organising his followers well, Otubu prevailed in the east so that Coker only took ten branches - from western Nigeria - into his, "The Eternal Sacred Order of St. Michael and Morning Star".

leadership is affected by the informal relations that develop between role holders; it is these cross-cutting links that modify the cleavage between the roles of elder, man of God and floor member and help to knit the structure of relationships together.

## CHAPTER 6

### The Prayer-House In A Neo-Urban Town

So far I have studied the prayer-house at Fegge, an electoral ward in the Waterside Town, as an entity on its own rather than as a segment of a wider social field of relations<sup>1</sup>. We saw, though, in Chapters 3 and 4 that Serafim are expected to behave as loving children of God at home and at work, as well as in the prayer-house. The ideal for Serafim is behaviour which is consistent with the norms of the prayer-house whatever the situation. Having considered behaviour in the prayer-house, it is time to look at the town of Onitsha where members live and work.

I conclude this thesis on the branch of the Eternal Sacred Order at Fegge by explaining how the prayer-house is tied into the field of

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1. In a recent essay Mitchell has discussed the way in which Barnes and Epstein have used the concept of the social field (J. Mitchell, 1966, p.57). It is generally agreed, however, that the basic idea of the term field is one which indicates a loosely bounded area of inter-connecting relationships. We can, for example, think of the sum total of the relations and relationships between the people of Onitsha as representing the social field. By implication, smaller sets of relationships can be isolated in the fields of work, the home, the voluntary association and so forth. That the term field is little more than a synonym for the concept of the institution should be obvious. The difference is that instead of concentrating on the structure of a collectivity like the family or the organs of government, we focus on the personal relationships between individual actors holding roles.

Onitsha by the roles of members outside the prayer-house. Since it is important to have some idea of the principal characteristics of the town's population, I begin with the process of urban growth which has transformed Onitsha from an over-grown village into the second largest town in the east. It was this same process which provided favourable conditions after the second world war for the emergence of aladura churches like the Order. After looking at the urban social hierarchy, I go on to examine the process of interaction between the social field and the prayer-house at Fegge.

#### Urbanisation in eastern Nigeria<sup>1</sup>

Influenced by the work of Wirth, students of urbanisation have generally agreed upon five criteria of urban growth (L. Wirth, 1938, pp.1-20). These are population density, social and geographical mobility, heterogeneity, the demographic disproportion of age and sex ratios, and economic differentiation. Southall applied these criteria to distinguish between pre-industrial and modern towns in Africa (A. Southall, 1961, p.7). And it is the absence of all but one factor - that of population density - which has resulted in the now accepted distinction between traditional Yoruba towns as Abeokuta, which are mainly agricultural and artisan communities, and modern urban centres like Lagos (W. Bascom, 1954, pp.450; and 1959, pp.29-42).

In eastern Nigeria, the pattern of urban growth has been rather different to that experienced in the west. This is because there were

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1. All the calculations in this examination of the social field of Onitsha are my own.



no pre-industrial centres in Iboland, just large village-groups with an average population in 1950 of 4,500 (D. Forde and G. Jones, 1950, p.17). After the first world war, when the colonial administration was firmly established, Ibo migrants moved to settlements where the offices of the regional and provincial administration were located. No studies have been made of urbanisation in Iboland, but it is clear that since the second world war the rapid economic development of the east has resulted in the emergence of three types of towns. Applying Wirth's criteria these may be called urban, neo-urban and agro-towns.

Port Harcourt is the only urban centre in the east; its economy is differentiated (Wirth's fifth criterion), because it is based on a complex of manufacturing industries, oil production, and the import-export trade. Neo-urban towns, which developed initially as administrative and commercial settlements, exhibit the other four criteria mentioned above. As most adults are employed in trade or by the government, there is little extensive economic differentiation. Onitsha, Aba, Enugu and Calabar are the four neo-urban centres of the east with populations of over 50,000. Agro-towns, as their name implies, are mainly dependent upon agriculture and have populations of between 5,000 to 50,000. They include centres like Nnewi and Ihiala (see Map 2, p.65); and in 1953 thirty-seven per cent of the population of Onitsha province lived in towns of more than 5,000 inhabitants (Census, 1953, vol.1, pp. 16-17).

We should place the emergence of Onitsha as a neo-urban centre

in the context of wider demographic changes in eastern Nigeria. In spite of the controversy over the 1962 Census and the subsequent re-count in 1963, it is apparent that the population has been increasing since the early 1950's at about 3.5 per cent a year<sup>1</sup>, bringing the population of the east to over twelve million in 1963. Although the population as a whole grew by about 3.5 per cent a year, Port Harcourt and the four neo-urban centres grew by two to three times that rate<sup>2</sup>. Port Harcourt's population increased by 10.7 per cent a year; and the population of Onitsha, which was 76,000 in 1953, grew by 8.6 per cent each year to reach over 163,000 in 1963. Onitsha is second in size to Port Harcourt. The extent to which the towns have been developing is shown by the fact that in 1953 only fourteen per cent of the east's inhabitants lived in settlements with more than 5,000 persons (Economic Survey of Nigeria,

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1. In 1953, the population of the east was over seven million: the re-count of 1963, however, did not significantly alter the results of the 1962 Census, which gave a population of over twelve million. Demographers are still arguing about the actual rate of growth, but one - Olusanya - concludes that the growth rate is between three to four per cent a year (Olusanya, 1966, p.147). It is, however, possible to be more precise than this. Vital statistics for Lagos, and rural fertility studies in eastern, northern and western Nigeria (Barber, 1966; B. Nicol, 1959, p.20) enable us to use the reverse survival method to calculate the estimated rate of natural increase. Deducting the estimated crude death rate of 19 to 26 per 1,000 population from the estimated crude birth rate of 56 per 1,000 population, we get an estimated rate of natural increase of 3.0 to 3.5 per cent a year. This is high but Ghana, for example, has experienced a rate of 3.2 per cent natural increase in the previous decade (W. Birmingham and others, 1967, vol.2, p.93).
  2. The population of Port Harcourt grew from 71,000 in 1953 to over 179,000 in 1963 (U.N. Demographic Year Book, 1964, p.141); over 10,000 residents were added yearly.

1959, p.13). But by 1963 the proportion was twenty-eight per cent<sup>1</sup>, or about three and a half million people out of a total population of twelve million.

#### Some Demographic Aspects of Onitsha

Between 1931 and 1953 the population of Onitsha only grew at about 2.9 per cent a year<sup>2</sup>. Even by the early 1950's the age-sex structure of the population was representative of rapidly expanding towns. Whereas 47.6 per cent of the eastern population fell into the 15-49 age-group in 1953 (Census, 1953, vol.1, p.1), more than sixty-three per cent of Onitsha's male inhabitants were aged fifteen to forty-nine years in the same year (ibid, vol.7, p.16). Owing to the effects of migration from the rural areas into the towns, only thirty-seven per cent of the male population fell into this age-group in agro-towns like Nnewi.

Thus in the early 1950's, two-thirds of the men in Onitsha were active adults who outnumbered women in the same age-group by two to one. On the other hand there were 1.7 women to one man in the 15-49 age-group in the agro-town of Nnewi (ibid, vol.1, pp.34-35).

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1. In 1953, over one million persons in the east lived in towns of more than 5,000 inhabitants: that is, 14.7 per cent of the population of over seven million (Economic Survey of Nigeria, 1959, p.13). By applying the annual population growth rate of 3.5 per cent to the 1953 figure of one million urban dwellers, we get a total of 3,500,000 persons. So in 1963, twenty-eight per cent of the population of twelve million lived in towns of more than 5,000 persons. Eleven per cent lived in the four major towns of Enugu, Onitsha, Aba and Port Harcourt.
  2. Between 1931 to 1953 the population of Onitsha increased by over 59,900 persons, from 18,000 in 1931 to over 76,000 in 1953 (Census, 1931, vol.3, p.24; and Census, 1953, vol.7, p.16). This gives an average growth rate of 2.9 per cent.

One of the outstanding features of migration into Onitsha is that it appears to be a mainly short-distance movement. As Table 6.1 indicates, 63.3 per cent of the Serafim and the control group I interviewed in Onitsha came from within a radius of thirty miles of Onitsha; and of these short-distance migrants, 30.7 per cent had homes in the Orlu area. Orlu division had the highest population density of any eastern division in 1953 - 873 persons per square mile (ibid, pp.16-17).

Table 6.1 Migration Distances Covered by Onitsha Immigrants: 1965

<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Within 30 miles of Onitsha</u>	<u>30-70 miles</u>	<u>100 miles or more</u>	<u>Total</u>
Two prayer-houses at Fegge and Inland Town	58	8	39	105
Control Group	53	6	20	79
Total	111	14	59	184
Plus 32 persons born in Inland Town				216

Although the majority of the immigrants in my sample were traders, artisans or skilled labourers (see Chapter 2, p.104), over seventy-nine per cent of the men and women interviewed were literate. This proportion may be rather high<sup>1</sup>, but it reflects the fact that it is the educated

1. Birmingham, for example, found that thirty-five per cent of the urban dwellers interviewed in the Ghanaian National Survey of Migration were literate. But in the rural areas surveyed, seventy-five per cent of those intending to stay were illiterate (W. Birmingham and others, 1967, vol.2, p.136). However, even if my surveys were biased in favour of literates (see Appendix A), one important aspect of the sample was that of the nine unskilled labourers included only two were illiterate. Most people seem to have at least a smattering of formal education.

who are most likely to leave their home villages for the attractions of life in the town.

Onitsha: A Mono-Economy

Like the majority of adults working in non-rural occupations in the east, only a small proportion of the employed population in Onitsha work in the modern sector which includes factories, offices and business concerns. The estimated distribution of the population in the modern and commercial sectors of the town's economy is shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2    The Occupational Distribution of the Adult Population<sup>1</sup> in Onitsha: 1965-1966

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent of category</u>	<u>Per cent of total adult population</u>
<u>Total in Registered Employment:</u> <sup>2</sup> <u>of which</u>	11,800		11.0
Secondary Industries	5,400	5.0	
Tertiary Industries	6,400	6.0	
<u>Total Independently Employed:</u> <sup>3</sup> <u>of which</u>	47,900		49.0
Trade, Hawking, Vending, Shop-Owners	41,500	43.0	
Artisans, Tailors,	6,400	6.0	
<u>Total in Miscellaneous Occupations:</u> <sup>4</sup>	4,900		5.0
Self-employed lawyers, engineers, mechanics, electricians, etc.			
<u>Total in Paid Employment, Trade and Other Occupations</u>	64,700		65.0
<u>Total Estimated Unemployed or Partially Unemployed</u>	31,300		33.0
TOTAL ADULTS	96,000		98.0

1. 2. 3. 4.    See overleaf.

1. In 1953 there were 45,000 adult men and women living in Onitsha out of a total population of 76,000 (Census, 1953, vol.7, p.16): that is, about sixty per cent of the population were aged 15-49 years. Assuming that the age-sex distribution of the population has not shifted significantly since then (this is a large assumption, but in the absence of any figures we have no alternative) 96,000 persons out of the 1963 population of 163,000 were working adults (that is, sixty per cent of the 1963 population).
2. Information from the Ministry of Labour: Unpublished Analysis (1965) Of Industrial Establishments In Onitsha.
3. Estimates for this category are based on the following sources:
  - (a) Traders, etc. Information obtained by interviews with the Market Master and his staff. Of the total estimate of 41,500 traders: 25,500 worked in the five markets recognised by the Onitsha Urban County Council. 15,500 were allocated to the bars, shops, stores and local markets which are scattered over the town. this gives a total of 41,000 men and women. These estimates are, of course, approximate figures. For, whereas over forty per cent of the men at the Fegge prayer-house were traders, just about thirty per cent of the control group were so employed. This difference in the occupational distribution of the two samples emphasises the point, that the estimate of forty-three per cent of adults being engaged in trade must be regarded only as an approximation in the absence of reliable data (see Appendix A pp.268-270, for a discussion of this point and the likelihood of significant errors in my samples).
  - (b) Tailors, etc. One-fifth of the sixty-seven women interviewed were dressmakers. But very few of these carried on dressmaking as a regular source of daily income. I have therefore excluded dressmakers from my estimate. Only three men in the two surveys were gainfully employed as tailors.
  - (c) Artisans. Of the 149 men interviewed only eleven were artisans: that is, 0.7 per cent of the two samples. That this proportion is not representative of the population is indicated by the 1953 Census figures for Onitsha. About six per cent of the adult male population were artisans. I have therefore used this proportion to calculate the numbers of artisans.
4. According to the Onitsha branch of the Nigerian Bar Association, there are about eighty lawyers practising in Onitsha. On the basis of personal observation, I have allowed for about ten engineers who are independently employed in contract work; those of elite status form about 0.1 per cent of the adult population. The remainder of this category are of non-elite status. Around 0.8 per cent of those interviewed in my two surveys were skilled, self-employed workers (see Appendix A). But as the surveys probably under-estimated the proportion engaged in such occupations as well as the proportion of artisans, I have allowed for about 4,000 persons to make up this category. This estimate is, of course, very conjectural.

Onitsha is, then, a trading town par excellence since about forty per cent of the adult population are engaged in some form of trade. It seems likely that the flexible nature of small-scale petty commerce conceals much under-employment and unemployment, because anyone with a few shillings or pounds can set up his own stall. A typical shed in the Main Market, for instance, has three occupants in addition to the owner of the shed. These people are usually junior kin, who sit by lending a hand when needed; they are supported by their patron. One indication of growing unemployment in eastern Nigeria (I have no figures for Onitsha), is the relationship between the annual supply of school-leavers and the numbers of jobs available. Only about six per cent of all school-leavers in the mid-1960's found work in manufacturing establishments, transport, construction, the services and government<sup>1</sup>.

The main point about a commercial economy like Onitsha's is that the average immigrant does not find himself in an alien work situation. Trade is conducted on much the same lines as it is in the village, a relation or townsman will show him around and probably lend him money to start his own line of trade. Just as nearly half of my sample at the Fegge prayer-house joined through the advice of kin or townsmen, so do many strangers use their bonds of common origin extensively when they

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1. In 1964 to 1965 there were about 93,000 school-leavers in the east (Statistics of Education in Nigeria, 1964, pp.28-34). But there were only 5,000 new jobs available in registered employment in work-places which employed more than ten persons (Ministry of Labour, Enugu, 1965; Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1961, p.158; Annual Statistical Digest E. Nigeria, 1963, p.57 and 1965, p.137). Thus, only about six per cent of school-leavers will find work in registered employment.

first arrive. It is, therefore, doubtful whether anomie, or the social condition of so-called "normlessness", exists in a neo-urban town like Onitsha<sup>1</sup>.

### The Urban Social Hierarchy

What is more to the point is that in the absence of extensive economic differentiation there is no really marked divorce between relations based on the work-place, and those coming into use after working hours, which appear to exist, for example, within the "unitary system of Roan Antelope mine" in Luanshya, Zambia (A. Epstein, 1958, pp.99-100; 147; 198). The predominantly trading economy of Onitsha means that the majority of the population are "workers"; a minority make up the elite<sup>2</sup>, who knowing one another well, frequently interact with the same people at work and during leisure hours. With regard to the tendency for relations in the fields of work and leisure to overlap, there is little to distinguish the elite or the workers.

Table 6.3 on page 228 gives an approximate picture of the urban

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1. K. Little, for instance, has made the sweeping assertion that "the industrialised town...implies a social and psychological situation, which might amount to anomie were it not that voluntary associations provide a link between traditional and urban ways of life" (1965,p.87).
  2. By elite I mean people of superior status, who form groups which have close bonds born of common life interests, values and behavioural expectations. The elite form a distinct stratum, the members of the elite being ranked by the criteria of income, education, occupation and life-style. For as Peter Lloyd has pointed out, owing to the prestige of pen-pushing occupations a poor clerk will rank about a wealthy trader who is presumably less well educated (see P. Lloyd, 1966, pp.4-5). The "workers" stratum is made of several strata; these are the non-elite who are also ranked by the criteria of income, education, occupation and life-style.



BIG MEN	Senior professions, senior civil service, directors, ministers	O-1 Degree, M.A.S.C.	£2,500-£5,000	Two or more houses, or government house, fridge, T.V., 2 cars, air-conditioning
THE ELITE	Junior professions, executives, managers, Secondary school teachers, principals, few big business men with government connections, politicians, bishops	Degree, M.A.S.C. Standard 6	£720-£2,000	Two or more houses, or government house, fridge, T.V., 1/2 cars, optional air-conditioning
SUB-ELITE	Sub-professional, teachers in primary schools, clerks, secretaries, ordained clergy, catechists, technical officers, non-graduate engineers	O/A level, R.S.A. City and Guilds, Teacher-Training	£80-£900	School/church house, 1-3 rooms, Honda or car
WORKERS	Big traders, big businessmen, skilled technical workers, technical foremen	City and Guilds, Primary School	£300-£2,000	Own house/flat/let/2 rooms, fridge, car or Honda
	Technical workers, foremen, qualified craftsmen, artisans	Primary School Diplomas/Secondary	£96-£174	1/2 rooms, Honda/bicycle
	Production process workers, skilled labourers, minor technicians, sales workers	Some Secondary Primary	£60-£180	1/2 rooms, Honda/bicycle
BUSH	Small traders, artisans	Illiterate/some Secondary	£76-£180	1/2 rooms, Honda/bicycle
	Petty traders, petty craftsmen, servants	Illiterate/Primary	£48-£120	1 room shared with others or own room
POOR	Unskilled labourers, load-carriers, servants, hawkers	Illiterate/Primary	£24-£12	1 room shared with others
		99.9		

The Urban Social Hierarchy

1. Information for classifying the different occupations was obtained from the following sources: the Eastern Nigeria Industrial Enquiry, 1961-62 (1964, pp.8-14); the Economic Survey of Nigeria (1959); Report of the Commission of the Review of Wages, Salaries and Conditions of Service, 1963-1964 (1964, pp.12-93); the Urban Consumer Surveys in Nigeria, Lagos, 1959-60 (1963, pp.2-30); I also used my own judgement in the case of some occupations in the bush poor stratum, the lowest category of the workers' stratum and the positioning of the clergy.
2. 1,317,874 tax-payers were reported in 1963 (Annual Statistical Digest, Eastern Nigeria, 1965); the different strata are expressed as a proportion of this total population. The proportion of the population paying taxes placed into each strata is based on the proportion in equivalent income categories in the income tax breakdown given in the above source.
3. Source as above, see page 123.
4. I have based the main elements of the life style of the various strata on personal observation, and information from the Report of the Commission of the Review of Wages, Salaries and Conditions of Service, 1963-1964 (1964, pp.12-93).

hierarchy in eastern Nigeria. I was unable to draw up a chart for the Onitsha population as there is insufficient factual information. But with the exception of the elite who form about 0.1 per cent of the adult population in Onitsha<sup>1</sup>, and about three per cent of those paying taxes<sup>2</sup>, there is no reason to suppose that the economic and occupational distribution of the workers' stratum is widely divergent from that given in the Table.

The lack of occupational differentiation at the bottom of the status hierarchy should be noted: the elite have more openings available to them. It is very likely that the more solid financial resources

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1. See footnote 4, p.225. It is impossible to say exactly how many senior civil servants or managers work in Onitsha. But since there are only four large factories; about ten government offices each supervised by a senior civil servant; and about seven doctors, we can add around twenty-one professionally employed men to the ninety lawyers and engineers. They form about 0.1 per cent of the adult population.
  2. The only factual information available to calculate the approximate proportions of adults in each stratum is the breakdown of the major income categories of the one and a quarter million tax-payers reported in 1963 (see Annual Statistical Digest, Eastern Nigeria (1965, p.123)). I am therefore making the large assumption that the majority of the tax-payers included are employed in non-rural occupations. In spite of this drawback, the table does give some broad idea of the probable stratification of the urban population in eastern Nigeria of one and a half million persons. In 1953 twelve per cent of the adult population were employed in non-rural occupations (Census, 1953, vol.1, p.1.). In 1963, I have calculated that about three and a half million persons are urban dwellers (see p.222 footnote 1); and since about half the population in the east falls into the 15-49 age-group, we can assume that about one and three-quarter million of the three and a half million urban dwellers are working adults.

of the elite<sup>1</sup>, and the many congenial societies, clubs and cultural associations which cater for them is one reason why they are, on the whole, not so easily attracted to an aladura church like the prayer-house. One illness can "eat" (as the Ibos say) the small savings of a trader; a lawyer is far less likely to have to fall back on an aladura church as a last resort.

#### The Aladuras in Onitsha

The aladura movement in the east has gone through two phases of development. Up to the second world war it was the rural areas of the Delta, Rivers and southern Owerri province which were subjected to intensive evangelisation by the mission<sup>2</sup> and the pentecostal churches. Many of these churches, including the formerly semi-independent Niger Delta Pastorate Church (now linked to the Church Missionary Society), were led by Nigerian pastors and elders. The Catholics were a late starter in this area which, from the 1850's, was a Protestant stronghold. By the early 1950's, between sixty-five and ninety-two per cent of the population in the rural areas of the Delta and Rivers were Christians, and twenty to forty-two per cent were literate (Census, 1953, vol.1, pp.4-5). On the other hand, white dominated areas like

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1. The 1959-1960 Urban Consumer Surveys in Lagos revealed that of those respondents earning less than £400 a year, only the clerks balanced their budget without the aid of wealthier kin. Their ability to be financially self-supporting was a direct function of their higher earnings.
  2. By mission churches, I refer to European controlled or financed denominations as the Church Missionary Society, the Roman Catholic Mission, the Methodists, Baptists; and the pentecostal missions as the Assemblies of God, the Faith Tabernacle and the Seventh Day Adventist which are also controlled by Europeans.

Onitsha province progressed slowly. In 1953 only twenty-six per cent of Onitsha province were Christians, compared to the regional average of fifty per cent Christianity (ibid, p.9). It was, then, in the very literate and Christian Delta and Rivers province that the first eastern aladura churches arose after the first world war. It seems reasonable to suppose that the early aladura movement was associated with high literacy and Christianity rates. The implications of an educated population, acquainted in the Protestant tradition with a Bible open to interpretation, are obvious. Taught to search for the truth, and knowledgeable about the procedures necessary to organise associations, it only took a charismatic figure like Garrick Braide to set off a snowball growth of churches dedicated to demonstrating the powers of the Spirit.

But after the second world war, literate and mainly Christian immigrants began to pour into the towns. Within a decade, the old correlation between extensive evangelisation in the rural areas and the aladura movement had been replaced by higher literacy rates in the major urban settlements<sup>1</sup>. And now, the aladura churches organised their headquarters in the towns and moved out into the bush, evangelising and establishing branches. Thus, the Fegge prayer-house has set up eleven daughter prayer-houses in the rural areas during the past five years.

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1. The highest literacy rate in the Delta and Rivers was forty-two per cent in Port Harcourt division, followed by the Ibibio areas of Uyo-Oron-Ikot Ekpene. In 1953 twenty-six per cent of the Onitsha population were literate. But the surveys undertaken by myself indicated that seventy-nine per cent of those interviewed in 1965 in Onitsha were literate.

It seems that in addition to the exchange of ideas between migrants from Iboland and the Delta, which must have favoured the introduction and development of the aladuras in Onitsha, the high literacy rates among Christian immigrants favoured the search for a spiritual way of worship. Forming their own church<sup>1</sup>, or joining one already established, members had much more say in how "their" church was to be organised and how they would worship, than they had had in their former denomination.

The growth of the aladuras in Onitsha can, therefore, be directly correlated with the rapidly increasing population of the last decade, which presumably swelled the proportion who were literate. For over seventy years, there were only two churches in Onitsha: the Church Missionary Society and the Roman Catholic Mission. But between 1942 and 1966 the number rose to twenty-four; seventeen of these churches were aladuras. And of the aladuras, twelve were established after 1960<sup>1</sup>.

Table 6.4 on page 234 shows the estimated size of the different churches in Onitsha, and the number of branches associated with each body. It is noticeable that the aladuras have twice as many branches as the Church Missionary Society or the Catholic Mission. But the total membership of the aladuras only forms about ~~the~~ <sup>two</sup> per cent of the population. Nevertheless, the Table emphasises the point that aladuras like the Eternal Sacred Order in Onitsha thrive on a more differentiated population than was true of this town before the second world war<sup>2</sup>.

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1. For my source of information see footnote 5, p.235.

2. The importance of geographical mobility in the growth of aladura churches in Onitsha is evident from the origins of the founders of the seventeen aladuras. Four came from western Nigeria, two were non-Ibos from the Delta and Rivers provinces, nine were Ibos from outside Onitsha and one was founded by an Onitsha woman.

Table 6.4 Mission and Aladura Growth in Onitsha

<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Church</u> <sup>1</sup> <u>goers</u>	<u>% total</u> <u>population</u>	<u>Branches</u>	<u>Date of</u> <u>foundation</u> <u>in Onitsha</u>
Roman Catholic Mission <sup>2</sup>	60,100	36.0	4	1885
Church Missionary Society <sup>3</sup>	22,000	13.0	8	1857
<u>Pentecostal Missions</u> <sup>4</sup>		0.1		
Seventh Day Adventist	70		3	1949
Faith Tabernacle	30		1	1950
Assemblies of God	100		2	1955
First Baptist Church	10		1	1961
Apostolic Church <sup>5</sup>	50		1	1963
<u>Aladura Churches</u> <sup>5</sup>		2.0		
Fundamental Apostolic Faith	50		1	1942
Christ Apostolic Church	3,000		4	1946
Apostolic Christian Mission	60		2	1948
Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Serafim	210		2	1949
Sacred Order of Cherubim and Serafim	200		1	1959
Church of Christ Disciples	25		1	1960
Oke's Cherubim and Serafim	12		1	1960
All Christians Praying Band	200		1	1960
St. Joseph's Chosen Church of God	65		2	1962
Church of Christ the King <sup>6</sup>	50		1	1963
Mrs. Egbuna's Church	30		1	1963
Apostolic Faith	25		1	1964
Holy Chapel of Miracles	25		2	1964
Brotherhood of the Cross and the Star	15		1	1965
Christ Healing Church	300		1	1965
Saviour's Apostolic Church	10		1	1966
The Lamb of Cherubim and Serafim	6		1	1967
<u>Total Membership R.C.M. C.M.S.</u>	82,100	49.0 <sup>7</sup>		
Total Membership pentecostal missions and aladuras	4,283	2.1		

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1-7. See overleaf.

1. By church-goer I mean members who are recorded as attending regularly. The Church Missionary Society churches, for instance, record the attendance at a Sunday morning service once a month. The Catholic headquarters in Onitsha keep a record of all their baptised members, catechumens and check attendances regularly. The aladuras, on the other hand, base their figures on tithe records or membership lists.
2. Figure from the Etat des Oeuvres et du Personnel de la Congregation, (1967).
3. This is based on the attendance lists I collected from six branches, with estimates for the other two branches drawn from personal observation when I attended services in 1966. The estimate includes the 9,000 registered members kept by the Church Missionary Society headquarters in Onitsha.
4. Estimates from the Pastors and Elders Survey of 1966 (see Appendix B). Three pastors filled in questionnaires; I interviewed the other two informally.
5. Estimates derived from membership lists collected in 1966 from nine out of seventeen aladuras; interviews with elders and prophets; and approximate calculations for the Church of Christ Disciples, Saviour's Apostolic Church, and the Lamb of Cherubim and Serafim based on the information of members, and hearsay in the case of the Church of Christ Disciples.
6. This church stopped functioning in 1965.
7. This percentage should be compared with the fifty-one per cent of my survey of non-members who called themselves Catholics; just twenty-four per cent called themselves members of the Church Missionary Society. Such tight estimates based on records are rather misleading because many more people call themselves Christians, but may only attend services irregularly.



### A Neo-Urban Town

During the past thirty years, and particularly within the last decade, Onitsha has grown from a large village on the Niger to a bustling urban centre which exhibits four of Wirth's criteria of urban growth. The population of Onitsha is densely packed as the 163,000 inhabitants live within an area of only four square miles; it is increasing at about eight per cent a year so the inhabitants are mobile; and there are probably twice as many adult men as adult women whereas women tend to outnumber men in the rural agro-towns. As we have seen the economy of Onitsha, although more differentiated in quantitative terms than the economy of an agro-town, does not yet resemble the specialised economy of a modern urban centre like Port Harcourt which is mainly based on manufacturing industries.

The process of social and economic differentiation has been marked by the emergence of distinct strata, which are ranked in a prestige hierarchy by the criteria of occupation, education, income and life-style. As the population grew and took in an increasing number of immigrants from different parts of the east, new churches arrived and flourished. In 1940 there were only two denominations, the Church Missionary Society and the Catholic Mission; by 1966 there were twenty four religious bodies, and seventeen of these were aladuras.

The Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Serafim was one of the earliest aladuras to arrive. Like other aladuras in Onitsha, the Order was typical of the way in which these churches were established

in the town. A prophetess came from the west in 1947 to preach the gospel of the God of Moses Orimolade Tunolashe; by 1950, after the branch at Fegge had been founded, she was in regular contact with the Order at Enugu which had been established by a Yoruba clerk on transfer. Like the other aladuras in Onitsha, the branch at Fegge attracted literate and Christian immigrants, mainly from Protestant denominations. In the early years they were traders, but by the late 1950's the prayer-house was recruiting some lower paid clerks of sub-elite status. It might then be expected that the absence of persons of "bush poor" or elite status has had some influence on the nature of relationships in the prayer-house.

The Prayer-House in Onitsha: Serafim in the Market and Office

Before going on to assess the influence on the role structure of the predominantly worker's status of Serafim at Fegge, I will first of all consider the way in which the roles of Serafim at work link the prayer-house into the social field. Since the problems of Serafim which arise in situations outside the prayer-house are very much the affair of the men of God and other members, it would seem that role behaviour in the office or market can affect a member's relationships in the prayer-house. The same of course is true of conjugal roles, but I have insufficient material to make an analysis of such roles worthwhile. Again, on occasions Serafim may also be unable to reconcile the ethics of the prayer-house with the pressures exerted on them in the work-place.

An important aspect of role holding, which links the prayer-house to other fields of relations, is that most Serafim are members of at least two voluntary associations. These are generally the family and town union which have branches in Onitsha. Although some Serafim who come from far afield rely on their family or town union to keep them in touch with affairs back home, over sixty per cent of the prayer-house come from villages within a radius of thirty to seventy miles of Onitsha (see Chapter 6, p.223). These members go home once a month on average; some go every week-end to visit their relations. Nevertheless, the town and family unions do back up the duties of Serafim as townsmen who are obliged to care for new arrivals from their village-group.

Table 6.5    Membership of Associations Outside The Prayer-House at Fegge

<u>Men and Women</u>	<u>Prayer-House</u>		<u>Control Group</u>
	<u>Elders</u>	<u>Floor</u>	
Those belonging	35	29	57
Those not belonging to any association	2	13	4
<u>Total</u>	37	42	61

Although all but two of the male and female elders belonged to associations, thirteen of the floor members had opted out. This figure may be deceptive, because nine of these people were women, who tend to be less active in associations based on their home town as they are more of a man's affair. Only five male floor members did not belong

to an association. On the whole, about ten per cent of the members in my sample were not attached to any association, compared to about 0.6 per cent of the control group. It therefore seems possible that women in the prayer-house feel they have less need to keep up with their town or family union, because they are fully occupied attending services in their leisure hours. This point also applies to the brothers to a certain extent for ten of them said that they had no time now to attend meetings outside the prayer-house. Some even stopped paying their subscriptions, until one elder died and the prayer-house had to pay for transporting his corpse back home. After this, the senior elders issued a warning that all members must at least pay their dues, even if they did not attend meetings.

It seems that there is a tendency to withdrawal among some Serafim to whom the prayer-house becomes the all absorbing centre of their lives. But this drift is checked by the tendency for elders to gain sub-roles in associations, on account of their status as senior members of the prayer-house.

Table 6.6    Sub-Roles in Associations and Prayer-House Societies at Fegge

<u>Men Only</u> <u>Sub-Roles</u>	<u>Prayer-House</u>		<u>Control Group</u>	
	<u>Elders</u>	<u>Floor</u>	<u>Secular</u>	<u>Church</u>
Associations	15	5	17	4
Prayer-House Societies	7	1		
Both	22	6		
None	5	17	31	44
<u>Total</u>	27	23	48	48

There is no significant difference in the proportion of each sample holding leadership roles in associations - it is about two-fifths in each case. But of the floor members only five held positions in associations outside the prayer-house, compared to fifteen of the elders. This suggests that role-holding in associations as tribal unions is either a function of age seniority or status seniority in the prayer-house: there was no real tendency in the control group for leadership to be specifically associated with age. Rather, literacy is more crucial: eight out of the ten white-collar workers in the control group held such sub-roles, compared to five out of seventeen traders. It seems, then, that elders hold more sub-roles in associations than floor members, because their prestige as an elder is recognised by their work-mates and townsmen.

What is also significant is that none of the thirteen women in the control group held leadership roles, but ten of the twenty-nine women in the prayer-house/<sup>sample</sup>were elders. Although the role structure is weighted against the sisters, who are allocated to an inferior set of roles and only given a few opportunities to lead societies, they do have more chance to exercise authority in a formal capacity than the women in the control group.

Turning to the work roles of Serafim in Onitsha an important point is that status in the prayer-house can sometimes back up leadership in the market. To take the market, for instance, nine of the elders in the prayer-house trade in the Main Market where they have sheds near

one another. Apostle Mma trades in rice, and there are three other elders and several floor members who have their own rice sheds, or assist the Apostle. Supervising Apostle Onyechi and two senior elders have grocery sheds about two hundred yards away; and during the working day these trading Serafim exchange visits, gossip, and settle prayer-house matters that are outstanding. It is Apostle Mma who has made a name for himself in the rice section as a peace-maker; he settles disputes between rice traders and their customers. Although he achieved this distinction on account of his natural leadership abilities (in the prayer-house he is said to have the gift of managing men), other rice traders now say that the Apostle is just and fair because he is a leading elder in a church which is known to be honestly administered.

Earlier in this chapter, it was pointed out that kinship ties soften the impact of life in Onitsha, and that as Onitsha is a trading town the average immigrant of workers' status does not find himself in an alien work situation (see p.226). Here we can see that the elders in the Main Market are linked by their occupational role and their membership of the prayer-house. And four of the nine also have the additional bond of common local origin - they come from Nkpologu<sup>and Uga.</sup> Thus, these men interact for much of the time at work with some of the same people they are closely associated with in the prayer-house. To some extent, their relationships could be called multiplex.

On the whole, the occupational roles of the white-collar members are more discrete, but six out of the ten clerks in my sample had

at least one other Seraf in their office. In some cases this was a matter of a member converting a fellow worker, or of one Serafim giving another a job. For instance, one brother owns a large bakery which employs fifty workers; he brought in eight Serafs to work as clerks, labourers and van drivers. Another member in the Inland Town prayer-house managed to secure work for three Serafim in the factory where he was employed as a senior technician.

It would appear that Serafim who work in offices are considered to be notably conscientious in performing their duties<sup>1</sup>. These men were all clerks before they joined the prayer-house, and had admitted that they were ashamed of their previous rough and careless behaviour. The white-collar Serafim at Fegge seem to have been successful in adjusting their behaviour at work to the ethics of the prayer-house. However, not all Serafs manage to hold out against the temptations that come when several colleagues compete for promotion, or when it looks as if a hostile employer is trying to make a brother loose his job. For there are all too many applicants waiting to fill a vacant post. There is, for instance, the example of Leader George who was tempted to offer a bribe of £150 to his senior officer in the Ministry of Agriculture (George was being charged with offences which could have cost him his job). As his bribe was "eaten" and had no effect on the situation, George fell back on the prayers of the elders and the men

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1. I interviewed employers in three firms owned by expatriate interests, who had Serafim employees. Their assessment was, of course, based on personal impressions and a knowledge of the behaviour of the Serafim employees at work.

of God, which defeated his temptation. George then resolved to behave like an honest Seraf in future and to rely on God for everything.

Nevertheless, I give the case of Pastor Isaiah to emphasise the point that the role performance of some Serafim at work is consistent with that expected of them as members of the prayer-house. This case also illustrates the way in which work roles can impinge upon an individual's role in the prayer-house.

Pastor Isaiah in Work Trouble:  
December 1965-March 1966

Like all the Inland Town elders, Pastor Isaiah is a white-collar worker. He is a clerk in Armels, the largest transport firm in the east, and earns £10 a month.

In December 1965 a new manager came to take over from Pastor Luke, who was transferred to the west (Pastor Luke of the Inland Town prayer-house was the branch manager until December, 1965). Apparently the new manager took an instant dislike to Isaiah because he was a Seraf. Isaiah had to work longer and longer hours, without over-time, as well as night shifts. The elders and men of God were concerned when they got to know about the Pastor's troubles at work, and "put the matter to the Spirit". Leaders Ada, Ude and Ibekwe conducted candle prayers for their senior elder, and Isaiah himself fasted hard and prayed.

In March 1966, Isaiah was suspended from Armels without any indication as to why. He was given two weeks leave without pay while Armels thought the matter over. Seizing the chance, the Pastor left at once for a tour of seven branches which would enable him to receive prayers from powerful elders and the men of God, and would grant him a blessing from his work for God. On his return, Pastor Isaiah was told that he had been reinstated; no explanation was given. Isaiah saw this as a definite sign that God and the Spirit had really protected him.

Unlike most Serafim Isaiah did not indulge in recriminations against his enemies, although the visioners and elders said enemies were plotting against the Pastor. Acting like a humble Seraf, he



merely applied himself to his work fearing that he would loose his job. Trusting in God's power he went on a tour of seven branches which would, if it was God's will, help him to fight this great temptation. The trouble was averted for the time being. But it had the effect of further weakening the Pastor's already negligible authority over the ambitious Leaders, who conducted candle prayers for their senior elder. Unable to attend services regularly, the Pastor was also absent from the prayer-house, which was run by the Evangelist (who had been sent by Fegge to Inland Town after the dispute of March to October 1965), and the Leaders. When Pastor Isaiah pleaded with the elders again in September 1966 to grant him promotion, because vision said promotion in the prayer-house would bring advancement at work, they refused, presumably because he was in effect a nonentity without any following in the Inland Town prayer-house.

The preceeding account of role playing in work situations indicates that relationships in the prayer-house are carried over into the market and the office. Both traders, and to a lesser extent white-collar workers, interact with other Serafim at work. There is, then, for many members no sharp divorce between their roles as Serafim and as traders or clerks. Although the norms of the prayer-house are applied to role behaviour in the market or office, as the cases of Apostle Mma and Pastor Isaiah showed, there are other times when the pressures of competition bring temptation. Such a temptation came to Leader George, who offered a bribe to his senior officer.

Leadership roles in associations, which are held by the elders in the main, link the prayer-house to the field of Onitsha, and so does belonging to tribal unions. As we saw, role strain at work can also have some influence upon a member's relationships in the prayer-house. But, although many Serafs tend to withdraw from active participation in associations outside the prayer-house, confining themselves in their leisure hours to interaction with members, occupational roles tie Serafim firmly into the wider social field. It is here, and to a lesser extent in the tribal association, that they associate of necessity with men and women who are not Serafs, as well as with work-mates who are members of the prayer-house.

The Fegge Prayer-House in Onitsha: Status and Stability

Earlier, I mentioned that the social composition of the prayer-house has probably had some effect upon the role structure (see p.237). For the members are mainly of workers' status together with some lower paid clerks of sub-elite status. They share a similar standard of living, have bicycles or scooters, and rent two or three rooms. The same is true of the Inland Town prayer-house, where most members are of sub-elite status. But because they are clerks in local firms, or junior government workers, they live on the whole in much the same way as the <sup>more prosperous</sup> traders. It would be incorrect to assume that common life styles are necessarily an integrative factor, for Inland Town has had a notably troubled existence. But it does seem that in one respect the predominance of traders of workers' status at Fegge has, among other factors

which were discussed in Chapter 2, favoured internal stability in the prayer-house.

Unlike white-collar workers who get caught up in the politics of the civil service, the expatriate firm or government ministry where they work, traders are isolated from political in-fighting. Not being wealthy, or in a position to supply patronage and grant favours to job-hunters, the members are noticeably a-political. They are, of course, up to date in political events. But the Inland Town members, who are of sub-elite status in the main, are more involved in the struggles between senior elders in the Enugu and Port Harcourt prayer-houses who are seeking influence. It was at Inland Town that Senior Apostle Coker tried to recruit supporters for his fight against Otubu in 1964. He was received sympathetically but failed, because the elders there were uncertain whether or not to risk cutting themselves off from the Fegge prayer-house.

Thus, the members at Fegge are open to less friction arising out of the manoeuvring by more sophisticated elders for power within the Order. But relationships have also been influenced by the fact that the prayer-house does not seem to appeal to the irregularly employed of the lowest stratum. These people might be expected to be more susceptible to spiritual possession and to speaking with tongues, thereby introducing a dynamic element into the spiritual life of the prayer-house. However, the teachings of the elders show that members are not concerned with the revolutionary aspects of the Spirit (see

Chapter 3, p.134). Rather, their preoccupation is to learn how to best behave so as to please the Spirit, and to receive adequate warning about future disasters which they can then protect themselves against by strong prayer. Very often these warnings are given by visions which refer to categories of members by their occupations, as all clerks or traders. Such visions reflect the anxieties of Serafim about their ability to hold their job down, or to make a success of trading in the competitive conditions of an economy unable to provide work for all.

One explanation for the exclusion of the bush poor<sup>1</sup> from the prayer-house is that Serafim norms make too many demands on the irregularly employed, who live casual lives, drifting from town to town in search of the odd job. As we saw in Chapter 3, the ethical precepts of the prayer-house demand self-discipline, intelligent application, and a routinised way of life which Serafim can see is relevant to their way of life. Members of workers' status are people who have a chance of seeing their offspring better themselves by the education which they or their kin can afford to buy; and the ethic of self-discipline can be seen to be a relevant and helpful part of one's life. How much more

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1. Merran Fraenkel, writing of "Pentecostal" churches (i.e. the *aladuras*) in Monrovia has shown that the members there were predominantly illiterate. Apparently there is a regular correlation between social status and denominational affiliation, the elite attending such establishment churches as the Episcopal church, and the tribal people (or the "uncivilised") the "Pentecostal" churches. However, Monrovia has a very low literacy rate of only twenty per cent; and the social division between Creoles and tribal people is one which is non-existent in eastern Nigeria (see M. Fraenkel, 1964, p.161).

difficult for a wandering load-carrier or casual labourer, who is not even sure if he can manage to get enough shillings to pay his rent each week?

Although there is an establishment ethos about the prayer-house, the elite are conspicuous in their absence. That the elite do not join the prayer-house (including the church at Inland Town) is, as I suggested earlier (see p.234), due to their greater financial resources, absorbing activities, and their many positions of leadership on various charities, cultural and church societies. But there is also the fact that the elite find it difficult to reconcile their status and the enforced fraternisation with Serafim who are of lower status. Expected by their friends to associate only with the civilised, they encounter mockery when they are seen with Serafim. Serafim of elite status act in several ways so as to prevent any conflict between their membership of a low status church, and the behaviour expected of them by their elite friends. They either keep the fact that they are a Seraf a secret for as long as possible; or else they visit the prayer-house after dark when no-one will see them, living self-consciously compartmentalised lives, and entertaining Serafim when they think their elite friends are not likely to drop in. The third course, which most elite members in Enugu, Port Harcourt and Lagos eventually settle for, is to give up leisure contacts with elite friends almost entirely. They then confine themselves to associating with Serafim out of work, and to mixing with their colleagues in the ministry during working hours.

Thus, the conflict between their roles as a Serafim and as a member of the elite has been solved by consciously separating the two.

In this chapter I have outlined the process of urbanisation in Onitsha, and the emergence of the aladuras as a result of increasing social and economic differentiation. Appealing to literate Christian traders and clerks, the prayer-house at Fegge is tied into the social field of Onitsha by the occupational roles of Serafim and their membership of associations. Most Serafim appear to want to achieve a consistent balance between the behaviour expected of a Seraf, and their role performance in the work situation. The extent to which these roles can overlap is seen when role strain at work modifies the behaviour of a member's fellows in the prayer-house. Concluding, I showed how the predominantly workers' status of the Serafim at Fegge has indirectly contributed to the achievement of internal stability. Removed from the friction of elite politics, and manned by traders who have lived in Onitsha for many years, the ordering of roles in a hierarchy of authority has become sufficiently routinised to allow for adjustments in the system of relationships, which align role norms to changes in behaviour.

CONCLUSIONS: THE ROLE STRUCTURE OF AN ALADURA CHURCH

In 1925 an illiterate Yoruba prophet, Moses Orimolade Tunolashe, and a young Yoruba girl, Abiodun Akinsowon, founded the Praying Band of Serafim amidst the excitement aroused by Tunolashe's healing of Abiodun. One of the earliest aladura churches in western Nigeria, the Praying Band soon disintegrated, and by 1930 the rump following of Tunolashe had founded the Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Serafim. In 1949 the first branch of the Order in eastern Nigeria was established at Onitsha, a large settlement on the banks of the river Niger.

The prayer-house at Fegge, an electoral ward in the Waterside Town of Onitsha, formed the topic of the thesis. But in order to give some perspective to this study of roles in the Fegge prayer-house, I began by tracing the development of relations between the early Serafim in the Praying Band into the role structure of the Mt. Zion house of prayers, Lagos. This process, which at the time of research had gone on for forty years, was marked by three critical phases.

The first began after 1926 when, with members flocking to the Praying Band, Tunolashe failed to renew his role as a prophet by more miracles or dramatic prophecies. The vacuum was filled by interpolating some of the customary attributes and criteria of authority of the elder in the Yoruba lineage onto Tunolashe's charismatic role as a prophet.

He then became a praying-father addressed as "Baba" (father).

The second phase, which began with Tunolashe's death in 1933 and lasted until the late 1940's, centred on the general role of elder which slowly differentiated into a series of sub-roles. Each sub-role was named, and carried with it specific functions and loosely defined spheres of control. Like the role of elder, these sub-roles were legitimised by criteria of seniority associated with age, experience in the Order, and the attribute of being fathers in Christ to the flock. And so the charismatic gifts of visioning, healing and praying became the pivot of the man of God's role. On the normative level, however, the roles of elder and man of God were linked, because both categories of role holders shared the gifts of healing and praying which formed, though, the lesser attributes of the elder's role. For the prophet Tunolashe, whose charisma legitimised the role structure, had been both a man of God and an elder; his role supplied a model which represented the future development of relationships in the Order after his death.

The third and most critical development was the resolution of the succession problem in 1962, after the previously defunct Advisory Board had been re-established. Once the Baba Aladura had been elected and inducted by the Board in accordance with the newly established impersonal procedures, the Board went ahead and imposed a centralised system of administration. All prayer-houses were now linked to the national headquarters at Lagos by a hierarchy of committees. And just as important, the duties and exact authority of sub-role holders as well



as the men of God, were laid down in writing. Ordination was now a formal procedure which took place on the basis of definite criteria of merit. It was no longer the prerogative of the visioners and prophets to determine who should be ordained; their duties were, in principle, religious.

The significant point about the way in which the role structure of the Order emerged was that the process of routinisation depended upon criteria of authority, which were introduced from without the Mt. Zion prayer-house. Tunolashe's ability to lead his early followers sprang initially from his charismatic powers. This was personal leadership, which failed when the prophet was unable to produce more miracles. It was also a form of authority limited to the relations between Serafim and their prophet. The Order survived Tunolashe's death, because the customary concept of elderhood proved viable; and also because bureaucratic procedures for allocating authority between role holders, and for installing a Baba Aladura, were applied and accepted by Serafim after the court order of 1959. The final result was that the gifts of prophecy and visioning were routinised as they were identified with a charismatic role which was, in principle, subordinated to the Advisory Board.

But when the prayer-house at Fegge was founded by prophetess Esther, the third phase in the development of the Order's role structure at Mt. Zion had not yet begun. Nevertheless, the Fegge prayer-house inherited a system of internal organisation from the mother church in

Lagos, as well as a liturgy of worship, the principal annual ceremonies and rituals of prayer. The process of internal differentiation at the Fegge prayer-house was much influenced by the growing size of the congregation; by the idea of elderhood which the founding elders from the Ibo village-groups of Nkpologu and Uga brought with them; and after the late 1950's, by the arrival of several white-collar workers who pressed for reforms and dealt with much of the paper work.

The factor of size affected the way in which the Ibo Serafim at Fegge took up the sub-roles of elderhood; and it also influenced the system of government which developed. With the growth in the congregation and in the number of elders, the rapid mobility of the two Apostles was replaced by a slower rate of advance up the hierarchy. This had the effect of emphasising the middle sub-roles of Pastor and Rabbi. For whereas the senior elders were concerned to preserve their commanding position, the junior elders were eager to advance quickly. In this way elders, who were no longer permitted to miss out the sub-roles of Pastor and Rabbi, stressed the duties and spheres of control allocated to them.

As the numbers of elders and men of God grew, the ad hoc meetings which they held together led to friction. So in 1959 separate committee meetings were organised for elders and visioners. The previous method of informal administration had grown up on the basis of the intimate relations between the early members, who were few in number. The bonds of local origin, which had linked the early Serafim together, were later

reduced to the level of informal relations as the principle of government by committees was established, and Serafim took up the sub-roles of elders. Nevertheless the local ties between the founding elders were used extensively after 1959 to weld the new system of administration together.

The six ruling elders in the caucus, which has proved so effective in maintaining stability within the prayer-house are, with one exception, all from Nkpologu and Uga village-groups. Working within the system of government by elders in council, the caucus decide policy in outlined, presenting plans to the annointed elders and, when appropriate, to the junior elders meeting. However, the caucus are bound to listen to the opinions expressed by members of the two elders' committees. These elders can and do put up their own proposals, which are then thrashed out over several meetings. If the majority are opposed to the caucus and the Apostles on a more trivial matter to do with the prayer-house like buying land for a church, the majority prevail. When it comes to major decisions, the annointed elders are informed by the Apostles and the caucus; similarly, friction between elders is dealt with initially by the caucus.

The importance of ties between kinsmen and townsmen, which form the basis of the caucus's control of decision-making in the prayer-house, brings us to the way in which Ibo conceptions of authority influenced the role structure. For the system of relationships which was handed over by the Order to the Fegge prayer-house had evolved in Yorubaland.

Abiding by the customary idea of government by elders who act on the basis of a consensus of opinion, the founding elders dissociated the praying bands from decision-making. They seem to have taken an extreme line, because no other prayer-house in the four major urban centres of the east has so few praying bands. In 1965 there were only five bands; most other prayer-house in the east have eleven, compared to the sixteen bands which exist in the western branches of the Order at Lagos. That there are few bands in the Fegge prayer-house compared to other prayer-houses in the east probably has much to do with the social composition of the prayer-house. The branches in Enugu and Port Harcourt are mainly manned by more sophisticated white-collar workers, who get to know about alternative methods of organisation. And because they are usually transferred to another office every two years, they are less committed to avoiding possible trouble from over ambitious band leaders by checking their development. The trading elders at Fegge, on the other hand, remain in Onitsha to carry on their business in the market.

By the early 1960's, the principal features of the role structure at Fegge were established. The floor members are formally expected to abide by the humble and respectful behaviour owed by new members to the elders; the elders govern; and the men of God lead the congregation, representing in particular the opinions of the floor members about their elders and errant Serafim. However, the cleavage between these roles is modified at the lower levels of the hierarchy by the charismatic role of the visioner. This role can be held by floor members

and junior elders with the gift of visioning. Thus brothers, who combine the secular role of a floor member or junior elder with that of a man of God, knit the role structure together. But roles are ultimately united on the normative level by one common attribute: this is the gift of praying and healing. An elder who is recognised as a prayer or healer by his ability to pray powerfully, gains extra esteem among the members. Furthermore, different categories of roles are linked by the informal relations which develop between some elders, floor members and the men of God. Likewise, participation by the same members in different meetings and bands provides another set of links, which also act as a channel for spreading gossip about deviant Serafs.

The visioning session, which takes place on the floor of the prayer-house during services, is in many ways, the heart of the role structure. For it is here that role norms are aligned with behaviour. Moreover, the men of God also ritualise the organised secular sanctions of the elders, as well as the floor members' diffuse sanction of disapproval, through the messages brought to them by angels from the Holy Spirit. Thus, the roles of elder and floor member are fused in the ritual of visioning, during which time the men of God declare organised ritual sanctions that are authorised by the Spirit. For as long as the visioning session lasts, the norms of charismatic authority over-ride those of elderhood; and the values of the prayer-house are ritually reaffirmed and sanctified by the revelations of the Spirit.

It is the negative and affirmative visions given out by the men

of God which play so important a part in role control. Warnings are delivered by the Spirit about certain brothers who are misbehaving, about the presence of witches and evil spirits in the prayer-house, and about the temptations now facing individual Serafim. Gossip ensures that many visions are effective because members are constrained by the opinions of Serafim they associate with daily. Positive visions, which are a minority, promise blessings for good behaviour which the Spirit likes. In other words, the men of God state the rules, taboos and ethics of the prayer-house when they declare threatening messages for deviants, and when they promise rewards for conformity.

Negative visions hinge on the concept of sin and misfortune. Sinners are members who either pollute the prayer-house by breaking a taboo, or else they disobey a rule and the ten commandments. For this temptation will come. But illness and trouble at work are also due to the action of enemies, whom the men of God point out. Aligning the behaviour of Serafim to the ideal conduct expected of them, the men of God also order certain rituals to be carried out to protect members struggling against enemies or evil spirits. These include candle prayers, Revival Prayers and the tour of seven branches. The final ritual of thanksgiving takes place when the brother or sister is symbolically reunited with the congregation after his temptation has been warded off.

These rituals are carried out for individual members who have sinned or are in trouble from enemies. However, when a major taboo

is broken, or when factions form in the prayer-house, the ritual condition of the congregation as a whole is affected. If an elder is seen to be smoking and drinking and he enters the chancel later on in this unclean state, the pollution must be cleared by prayers to reconsecrate the prayer-house. When members are divided among themselves, continually quarreling, the prayer-house is reconsecrated by special prayers. All members also partake of a Love Feast which is designed to unite Serafim in the peace and love of the Lord. Similarly the service known as Victory Prayer is held when friction spreads between members. The aim is to uplift all in the fervour of powerful prayers, which also call down the angels to ward off the evil spirits plaguing the congregation.

The total process of role control, which involves sanctions and rituals of prayer, begins when members fail to abide by the key precepts of love, peace and purity. These ethical tenets sum up the rules, taboos and norms of the prayer-house. From there, control usually takes place in one of three directions, depending upon the role holders initially involved. For example, control can begin with the organised and diffuse sanctions of the elders which are aimed at a disobedient floor member or elder. Then the floor members hear about the trouble and voice their disapproval, spreading gossip about the brother or sister concerned. The men of God learn about it, and issue ritual organised sanctions during the visioning session. Secondly, but more rarely, the elders deal with an offender so discretely that no-one gets to know about the affair.

The more usual starting point, however, lies in the diffuse sanctions exercised by the floor members. For the brothers and sisters on the floor form the majority of the congregation; they are therefore likely to commit more offences than the elders or the men of God. Generally, but not invariably, the floor hear about the misdeeds of their brothers and sisters before the elders. The visioners and prophets take up any rumours they hear from floor members with great alacrity; the brothers, and especially the sisters, are the most common scapegoat for any trouble which may be plaguing the prayer-house, because they are without any formal authority. The negative sanctions of the men of God can be followed by prayers, and services like Revival Prayer to avert the temptation facing a member. If an offender persists in committing a serious offence like adultery, the ruling elders take the matter up and summon him to their office. If informal pressures fail, the recalcitrant is dismissed or suspended from the prayer-house.

The extent to which role control in the prayer-house is effective can be assessed by considering why members generally comply with, and accept, the discipline of negative visions and protective rituals; and by looking at the power of the elders, which backs up normative procedures for maintaining conformity within the prayer-house.

The prayer-house is a voluntary association of interested people, which is believed to help members to protect themselves from the consequences of sin or from the action of enemies. The powerful prayers of the elders and men of God also bring an end to sickness, give



fertility and grant progress at work. But these material ends can only be assured if Serafim abide by the norms of the prayer-house. Their requests granted, as those who stay believe, new recruits remain to become committed Serafs.

After a couple of years or so on the floor new members are fully integrated into the prayer-house when they are first ordained. The danger period for loosing members, who <sup>may</sup>resent the interference of elders and men of God in their lives, is when they are on the floor. But even here, the daily pattern of visions which warn the congregation about accidents, death and the like are quickly succeeded by affirmative promises of blessings to good Serafim. Lest members relax and slide away, negative visions are delivered almost at once. In this way, Serafim and particularly those new to the ways of the men of God, are tied into the prayer-house by their dependency on the powerful prayers of the elders and men of God, which can avert the troubles gathering around them. But once a brother is an elder, his increasing involvement in decision-making and the comradeship of office offset any annoying set-backs with the senior elders, or irritation due to threatening visions delivered by the men of God.

The power of the elders, which is based on the caucus, is the key factor maintaining the established agencies for controlling behaviour and upholding the differential allocation of authority to role holders. Working on the assumption that Serafim accept the legitimacy of the role structure as it stands, the caucus of ruling elders, and through them

the annointed elders, maintain a united front against dissidents from the floor, the men of God or the junior elders. The men of God are, in the last analysis, under the elders' control. For the prophets are paid employees who can be dismissed, and the visioners are floor members or junior elders afraid of going too far and spoiling their chances of ordination by antagonising the Apostles and the caucus. As the ruling elders act in concert, they are able to impose new rules or regulations designed to prevent any further occurrence of trouble in the prayer-house: they therefore adjust the role structure to accommodate changing relationships. Valuing their status in the prayer-house, the other elders fall into line with the caucus, who can then contain a conflict like the one which developed in 1965 between the Inland Town and Fegge prayer-houses. With the senior prophet eager to earn more promotion, and therefore willing to support the elders in the prayer-house, dissidents have so far been accommodated.

The united stand of the senior elders in the event of trouble in the prayer-house sustains the normative agencies of role control, which hinge on the ritual of visioning. The ritual sanctions of the men of God are effective on the whole because, apart from factors like socialisation and gossip, the authority of the annointed elders, which centres on the influence of the caucus, is upheld by the elders' power to contain any challengers. Monopolising the reward of ordination, and acting together when trouble stirs, the senior elders maintain the established relationships between role holders. Having subordinated

the charismatic authority of the men of God, the role structure of the prayer-house is now fully routinised.

The internal stability of the Fegge prayer-house has also been indirectly furthered by the predominance of traders who are of workers' status. Removed from the disruptive effects of power politics in the Order as a national organisation, the prayer-house has been relatively undisturbed by the strains which recur in branches run by more sophisticated elders. One of the earliest aladura churches in Onitsha, the process of urbanisation has produced a socially differentiated population. But the prayer-house appeals to literate and mainly Protestant immigrants who have a regular means of livelihood; their concern is to ensure that they progress within the urban hierarchy. To this end, the self-discipline imposed by the prayer-house can be seen to produce results in the work situation. The members are therefore essentially conservative in orientation: something of this attitude may be carried over into their relationships in the prayer-house.

In this aladura church at Fegge, customary and bureaucratic criteria of authority, introduced from without the prayer-house, have prevailed over the authority of the men of God in principle and practice. The elders have established their right to rule on the basis of customary concepts of seniority, which demand respectful obedience from juniors. At the same time the bureaucratic principle of an impersonally ranked series of sub-roles, which are allocated specific duties and spheres of control, has been vindicated by the Fegge elders. Undoubtedly,

this last development was influenced by the post-1962 reforms at Mt. Zion, which imposed an efficient system of regional and national administration on the Order. But the initial impetus to set up an up to date committee system in the prayer-house originated in internal processes of growth. And it was the elders at Fegge who strengthened their own authority through the power of the caucus, which is based on local ties of origin. The elders therefore upheld the differential allocation of authority to particular roles. Thus, the role structure of the Fegge prayer-house in Onitsha is the creation of interaction between three factors: the role structure inherited from the Order at Mt. Zion, Lagos, social relations between the Serafim at Fegge, and elements originating in the field of Onitsha and the wider field of Iboland.

## APPENDIX A

### The Two Surveys of Members of the Fegge and Inland Town Prayer-Houses in Onitsha, and of Non-Members in Fegge and Inland Town, Onitsha

I carried out the two surveys of members and non-members between July and August, 1965. The survey of members at the Inland Town and Fegge prayer-houses was based on interviews with 103 respondents at the two prayer-houses. The survey of non-members consisted of a sample of 103 persons resident in Inland Town and Fegge.

#### The Control Group

The survey of non-members was intended to provide some means of checking the validity of data obtained from respondents at the two prayer-houses. Since there was no comprehensive electoral lists or a postal directory, the control group was sampled as follows.

The names of all the streets in Inland Town were written on slips of paper; the first four drawn out of a hat were those in which I conducted interviews. In the event of refusals, a fifth street was drawn to act as an alternative. The same procedure was applied in Fegge ward, except that I drew out eight streets. A ninth street was drawn to act as an alternative in the event of refusals.

(i) Inland Town. I interviewed two women and seven to nine men in each of the four streets selected in Inland Town. There were two refusals by men; two interviews were then conducted in the alternative

fifth street. One person was chosen at random from every second or third house in each street. The final total was thirty-four men and eight women at Inland Town:

Mba Road	9 men and 2 women
Okosi Road	9 men and 2 women
Tasia Road	7 men, 1 refusal and 2 women
Ojedi Road	7 men, 1 refusal and 2 women
Ugwu na Obankpa	2 men
<u>Total</u>	Men = 34: Women = 8: <u>Grand Total</u> = 42

(ii) Fegge. Eight to nine men and two women were drawn from four out of the eight streets; and three to five men and one to two women were drawn from the remaining four streets. The selection procedures was the same as that applied in the Inland Town sample.

The final total was forty-eight men and thirteen women:

Niger Street	8 men and 2 women
Anyaegbunam Street	9 men and 2 women
Umuchu Street	8 men and 2 women
Okwenu Street	9 men and 2 women
Kaduna Street	5 men and 2 women
Balewa Street	3 men and 1 woman
Arondizogwu Street	3 men and 1 woman
Uzodinma Street	4 men and 1 woman
<u>Total</u>	Men = 48: Women = 13: <u>Grand Total</u> = 61

### The Membership Survey

I carried out interviews with 113 members of the two prayer-houses within one month of the survey of the control group being completed. Sixty-three floor members and fifty elders were interviewed. The respondents were selected at random at the end of morning, afternoon and evening services. One-third of the sample was drawn from the

Inland Town prayer-house, and two-thirds from the prayer-house at Fegge. In both cases, the proportion of respondents was about half or more than half of the membership of the respective prayer-houses.

The Inland Town branch has about fifty members; thirty-four were interviewed as follows.

Men: 16, of which 8 were floor members and 8 were elders  
 Women: 18, of which 5 were elders and 13 were floor members

The Fegge branch has about 168 members: 79 men and women were interviewed as follows.

Men: 50, of which 23 were floor members and 27 were elders  
 Women: 29, of which 19 were floor members and 10 were elders

Altogether, including both the prayer-houses:

Men = 66	Floor members = 63
Women = <u>47</u>	Elders = <u>50</u>
113	113
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>

In addition to the 113 members, I also interviewed 21 prayer-receivers, 10 at Inland Town and 11 at Fegge, in order to assess the reliability of the main sample and to find out if these potential recruits to the prayer-house differ in any respect from regular members. The 21 prayer-receivers interviewed were younger than the average member, more educated and were equally divided between the occupations of white-collar workers, traders and artisans.

## The Reliability of the Samples

### (a) Religion

The major difference between the members and the control group was denominational affiliation: the majority of the respondents at the prayer-houses were of Protestant affiliations, whereas about fifty per cent of the control group were Catholics. This proportion fits in with estimates obtained from the Roman Catholic Mission in Onitsha, which show that Catholics have more than ~~three~~<sup>times</sup> as many members as the Protestant Church Missionary Society, which is the next largest denomination in Onitsha.

### (b) Literacy

The two samples produced equivalent literacy rates of over eighty per cent for male respondents. The only difference between the Fegge members and the Fegge control group was that relatively few members reached secondary education, in comparison with the twenty-four per cent of control respondents. Taking both samples together, there was an overall literacy rate of seventy-nine per cent. In comparison with information we have for towns in Ghana this proportion is certainly high: to my knowledge there is no up to date information for urban centres in Nigeria.

It is possible that the surveys were biased in favour of literates on account of the fact that the control sample was drawn not from the commercial area of Onitsha, but from the mainly residential Inland Town and the western fringes of Fegge ward. Here, rents are



higher because of proximity to the centre of Onitsha. Houses on the eastern fringe of Fegge, which is far from the town centre, appear to be inhabited by lower income groups. And of course the prayer-houses tend to attract the literate. Although the control sample may be drawn from areas mainly inhabited by literates, the fact that of the nine unskilled labourers in the two samples only two were illiterate indicates that literacy rates are presumably high in Onitsha.

(c) Occupational distribution

The occupational distribution of the two samples was much the same, except that there were more skilled and technical workers in the control sample at Fegge than in the membership survey of the Fegge prayer-houses. The other feature was that artisans were presumably under-represented. For one would expect artisans in a commercial town where small craft work-shops, printing presses, and the like flourish, to form a higher proportion of the samples. Also, there is the fact that in the 1953 Census, about six per cent of the adult population were classified as artisans.

In view of the fact that my samples were drawn from residential areas, and not from the commercial centre of the town where there are markets, business concerns and many craft work-shops, it is likely that the proportion of artisans in the sample is under-represented.

More generally, from the point of view of the extent to which the occupational distribution of the respondents in the samples is

representative of the wider population, the proportion of traders was highest at the Fegge prayer-house and lowest in the Inland Town control group. But the proportion of white-collar workers in both samples was much the same. Since Table 6.2 in Chapter 6 (see p.224) indicated that about forty-three per cent of adults in Onitsha are traders, and only thirty per cent of the control group were so employed, I give below the occupational distribution of the two samples.

<u>Occupation</u> <u>Men and Women</u>	<u>Inland Town and Fegge</u> <u>Prayer-Houses</u>	<u>The Control Group at</u> <u>Inland Town and Fegge</u>	<u>Total</u>
White-collar	25	20	45
Skilled Workers and self-employed technical	5	14	19
Traders	44	27	71
Artisans	13	12	25
Skilled and Unskilled labourers	10	13	23
Paid workers of prayer-house	3		3
Unemployed	4	1	5
Retired		5	5
Housewives	9	6	15
Other		5	5
<u>Total</u>	113	103	216

Whereas Table 6.2 indicated that about forty-three per cent of the adult population are engaged in some form of trading, however petty, the total proportion of respondents in the two surveys engaged

in trading was just over thirty-five per cent. Twenty per cent of the respondents were of white-collar status, but most were employed in small indigenous concerns. The difference of over eight per cent between the proportion of traders in the samples, and that given on the basis of estimates by the Market Master and his staff, indicates that the proportion of the adult population in Onitsha engaged in trading may err either way by eight to ten per cent.

### The Questionnaire

My questionnaires for the two samples differed only in minor details, owing to the fact that I was concerned to find out more about the events leading to individuals becoming members of the prayer-house. The questions were grouped into categories as follows.

1. Name, address, tribe, home-town, year of birth, times respondent goes home each year, whether any kin live in Onitsha.
2. Marital status, number of children, number of wives.
3. Education, schools, etc.
4. Occupation of respondent, occupation of father and grandfather, occupations of kin, previous job history of respondent including unemployment.
5. Occupations of single and married women.
6. Church affiliation of respondent, religion of parents, churches attended by respondent.
7. For members of the Order in Onitsha: year joined the prayer-house, how joined, why joined, year in which member was baptised into the Order, when respondent began to pay tithes, meetings and bands attended in the prayer-house, leadership roles, rank of elder and ordination history of elders.

For non-members: churches attended including the aladuras, attitude to aladuras, meetings belong to in church, leadership roles.

8. Meetings attended outside the prayer-house, leadership roles.
9. Concepts of the supernatural, whether worried by evil spirits and witches, whether respondent has been poisoned and if so by whom, whether respondent sees visions, has dreams or trances.
10. Knowledge of the Bible, hymn book of the Order, etc.
11. Medical history.

APPENDIX BDesign of the Survey of Pastors and Elders: 1966

This survey was part of a wider study of religion in Onitsha organised by Robert Mitchell of North-Western University. Despite the completion of a Census of 800 persons (which I have been unable to get out of eastern Nigeria) and long interviews of 100 persons, the survey broke down. The reasons for the failure of this survey lie in the ambitious nature of the project, the length of the interviews (one and a half to two and a half hours each) and the political upheavals in the East during 1966-67. It seems that unlike the Yorubas, the Ibos object to passing their time in an apparently useless discussion which brings no financial reward.

The failure of this survey is an object lesson in the limitations imposed by the people on the survey designer. The ideal questionnaire in Iboland is one which is pithy and takes no more than five to ten minutes to administer: time is precious to Ibos.

The purpose of the questionnaire administered to pastors in the mission churches, and either the prophet in charge or the senior elders of the aladura churches, was to compare the social backgrounds of the pastors and elders, their attitudes to the problems of their members and to other denominations. It was also a useful way of

getting statistical information on the number of members, and the variations in attendances at services over four months.

By the time the survey had broken down, the following mission churches had been covered:

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| (a) <u>C.M.S:</u>                | Emmanuel Church, Inland Town<br>Bishop Crowther Memorial Church, Waterside<br>St. Andrews, Odoakpu, Waterside<br>St. Christopher's, Waterside<br>Christ Church, Waterside<br>St. John's, Fegge, Waterside<br>St. Stephen's, Inland Town<br>All Saint's, Inland Town |
| <u>Total</u>                     | 8 out of 8 C.M.S. churches  |
| (b) <u>R.C.M:</u>                | St. Mary's, Inland Town<br>Sacred Heart, Odoakpu, Waterside   |
| <u>Total</u>                     | 2 out of 4 churches with 2 refusals   |
| (c) <u>Pentecostal missions:</u> | Faith Tabernacle, Waterside<br>1st Baptist Church, Waterside<br>Seventh Day Adventist, Fegge, Waterside   |
| <u>Total</u>                     | 3 out of 5 churches   |

The following churches also filled in comprehensive membership lists:-

Emmanuel Church, Inland Town  
St. Stephen's, Inland Town  
Christ Church, Waterside  
St. Andrews, Waterside  
Bishop Crowther Memorial Church, Waterside.

A similar questionnaire was administered to the elders of aladura churches, but with modifications to take account of different origins and background of aladuras. The following churches were

covered:

St. Joseph's Chosen Church of God, Waterside  
 Fundamental Apostolic Faith, Waterside  
 Brotherhood of the Cross and the Star, Waterside  
 The Holy Chapel of Miracles, Inland Town  
 The Church of Christ the King, Inland Town

Total            5 out of 17 aladura churches

The following churches filled in comprehensive membership

lists:

The Holy Chapel of Miracles, Inland Town  
 Fundamental Apostolic Faith, Waterside  
 Brotherhood of the Cross and the Star, Waterside  
 Christ Apostolic Church, Waterside and Inland Town

Total            4 out of 17 aladura churches

Altogether 18 out of 34 churches were covered by this survey.

I obtained membership figures and histories of the other churches by interviews conducted by myself during 1965-66, and attendances at services of most of the aladura and pentecostal mission churches.

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